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THROUGH A TENT DOOR



BY THE SAME AUTHOR

O ROWAN TREE  
THROUGH FLOOD AND FIRE  
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FLOWER O' THE HEATHER  
THE ADVENTURE OF LIFE  
THE ADVENTURE OF DEATH



# THROUGH A TENT DOOR

BY ROBERT WILLIAM MACKENNA

LONDON

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.



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*First Edition* . . . July 1919  
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TO  
MY SON  
—“THE TORPEDO”—

AND HIS FRIEND

J. G. G. H.

BOTH SOMETIME OF THE SENIOR SERVICE





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## PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

THE title of this collection of papers and pen-pictures indicates the manner of their origin.

They are peeps at life from a bell-tent somewhere in France, transferred to paper in odd and broken moments. That is the explanation of their diversity in kind and quality, and of their many imperfections.

The stories are true in substance, with the exception of "The Visitant," which is altogether a work of the imagination. I make this statement to obviate misunderstanding.

B.E.F., FRANCE,                      R. W. MACKENNA  
*October 1918.*

To this edition of "Through a Tent Door" there can, alas, be no Author's preface. The suggestion that the book should be reprinted was made some months after the author had developed a rare but rapidly spreading form of paralysis, which commences at the feet and extends upwards inch by inch, until the vital centres are paralysed and death ensues. As a medical man the author knew that his colleagues could do but little for him, but he set to work to revise this book for publication. The paralysis reached his



hands before the work was accomplished, and the Lady has acted as his amanuensis. Had the paralysis spread more slowly there is reason to believe that one more essay would have been added. Its title would have been "Leaves picked up in the Valley of the Shadow," and it would have formed the nucleus for what he termed a "bonny book," a sequel to "The Adventure of Death" and "The Adventure of Life." The last sentence of this present book might well have formed the opening sentence of that unwritten essay.

R. M. B. McK.

LIVERPOOL,

*September 1930.*



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## I

### THROUGH A TENT DOOR

THE first man who made a house-door was an enemy of his kind. He shut himself in, but he shut the world out. He gained a little privacy, but he lost incalculable riches. He imagined he was protecting himself against the prowling brutes, but he was giving the wild beasts in his heart the chance to breed and grow strong. Behind closed doors suspicion between man and man is engendered, malice is fomented, and secrecy of life, with all its petty meannesses, is cultivated. No miser lives behind a door thrown open to the world : his vicious love of gold flourishes best behind lock and key. In all ages a closed door has been the ally of the conspirator. It has made intrigue and plotting possible, and it has been an indispensable auxiliary of that secret diplomacy which is the cockatrice's egg of war. Doors are the enemies of communal life, and the protectors of a selfish individualism. They change a man's friends—his blood-brothers—into his neighbour—those who live near him. No doubt a door has its uses. It excludes the rain, but at the same time it shuts out the dew, which is not always moisture wrung from a cloud,



but which may be the grace of God distilled through some human heart. And between that heart and ours the door is an impenetrable barrier. It bars the way of the wind, but it may check the fragrant zephyr as well as the blast of the hurricane—and some zephyrs are the breath of love. It keeps out the cold, but it hinders the full warmth of human affection from reaching us.

In virtue of primitive herd-instincts a man is usually ashamed of any deed he has done which may be detrimental to the common weal. He is ashamed of his doors. He has recognized in them at least one cause and evidence of his declension. It is the custom of man to dress in the most alluring garb those evil things which he loves. In this way he hopes to deceive others, and himself. So he has made the door the most attractive feature of the outer aspect of his house. He has flanked it with Corinthian columns, or arched it over with a festoon of carven flowers. He has honoured it with the dignity of a flight of steps, by which alone it may be reached, so that all who would approach it must bend their knees before it. He has placed above it a curved window of glass, through which of a night the warm beam a hidden lamp may send an invitation into the darkness. The light is like a beacon : and beacons do not beckon—they warn off. So also does the door. But, that his evil may seem good, man has made further use of artifice. A blank door would deliver its forbidding message too brusquely. So all doors are panelled, and caparisoned with



furnishings of silver, of brass, or of iron :—and every one has a keyhole. That little orifice adds hypocrisy to the uncharitableness of the door. The door shuts you out :—that, if unkind, is at least straightforward. The keyhole pretends to offer you an “open sesame”—but the spell is ineffective without the proper key. And the person who lives behind the door is the person who keeps the key.

But behind a closed door heaven may dwell, for love may shelter there.

These things I began to understand when I took to living in a tent. It had a door, but in that climate it was rarely necessary to lace it up, and it stood open night and day, winter or summer, like a great isosceles triangle through which I could look at the world, and the world could look at me. I was astonished to discover, when I began to study life from this coign of vantage, how much civilization had cost me. I thought I owed it much : I found it had deprived me of greater things than it had given me. Diogenes was no fool when he took to living in a tub. By doing so he got to know his fellow-men better—and that is a part of wisdom.

He who meticulously closes the door of his house whenever he enters it is excluding the whole world of Nature—and her lap is always full of treasure for those who care to gather it. There, of a night, in my little white tent, I could hear her breathing, and catch the rustle of her gentle movements as she stirred.



Four pine-trees stood sentinel round my tent. In the faint moonlight their tufted crowns looked like the headgear of stalwart men of arms. In the still watches I could hear the night-wind challenging them, and, finding that all was well, pass on. There were strange, uncanny sounds audible in the hush of the night. Mysterious whisperings, as though the earth tossed in her sleep and spoke in the language of dreams. And there were little leaping sounds, as though the potential life with which she teems moved in her womb. And once on an autumn night I saw a spectacle of unutterable beauty and bewildering surprise. All day long the air had been still and oppressive, so that men could hardly breathe. But, as the sun went down, the far horizon was lit by a flickering light, which flashed and disappeared, and danced and disappeared, and trembled and disappeared, and came and went again. And now and then the light endured for a longer period, when it seemed as though a window had been opened in heaven that the eye of God might look upon the world. But when night came, with her flock of stars, the strange phenomenon changed. The elusive lilac light still trembled through the sky, but, nearer at hand among the pine-trees where our tents were pitched, little flashes of lambent flame seemed to rise from the ground and leap impetuously into a larger galaxy of light let down from the heavens to meet them. I knew that it was all nothing more than an electrical storm, in whose vortex we chanced to be caught; but those eager flashes



from the earth gathered into the white arms of light that bent to meet them from the skies, turned our thoughts from the material to the spiritual, and from scientific fact to sublime aspiration. "Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed."

Such sounds—sounds which I can barely catch, and, catching, cannot comprehend—and such miracles of vision taught man, in the childhood of the world, to grope in the darkness, if haply he might find God. A dweller in tents, I became the coeval kinsman of primitive man: I shared his wonder, I understood his dumb questionings, but I did not participate in his dread. For knowledge, even though imperfect, may cast out fear.

Those who shelter themselves behind barred doors never hear the harmony of the night. Between the darkness and the dawn night is vocal with a thousand voices.

The stream that ran behind my tent chattered contentedly to the stars. Perhaps it told them of its many wanderings; perhaps it asked how long its journey was yet to be before it reached the ocean; perhaps it told the stars that some part of it was once a cloud and drifted through the sky beneath them; perhaps it breathed the hope that some day again it would be lifted by the strong arms of the sun into the heavens, and dwell once more for a little while afar from the uncleanness and contamination of the earth.

And the stars, which are full of knowledge and of consolation for those who understand their



language, were doubtless replying : “ You have travelled far, little stream, but now there is only another hour of wandering till you come to the caravanserai of the sea.”

The stars are the friends of all tent-dwellers. It was the skin-clad nomads of the Eastern plains who first sought to discover their secret. They looked through the doors of their tents, as I did of a night, up to the marvellous arch of the sky, sparkling with an innumerable host of lights. There was wonder in their hearts, for the mystery awed them, as they asked themselves what these lights might be, where they were, and how they came to hang above the earth like pendent jewels. The riddle was too profound for them to solve in its entirety, and it still baffles us, though we have learned much, and know that each of these hanging lights is a world, and that many of them are immeasurably greater than the little ant-heap on which we dare to inquire into the mystery of the universe. Even the largest of them appear to us as nothing more than scintillating points of light ; but we have learned that this is an illusion due to the distance which separates us from them.

No missile driven from a gun's hot mouth by the demon force of the most powerful propellant charge travels at the speed of light. Yet the nearest star of the fixed stars is visible to me to-night because of a beam that left it years ago. That beam has travelled through the depths of space at close upon one hundred and ninety thousand miles per second. It is reaching my



eye now. Its distance from the earth is almost inconceivable. Man has good need to be humble in the presence of such mysteries ; but there are greater mysteries in the heavens still. It baffles comprehension, it staggers the intellect, but it is an irrefutable fact that there are stars still visible to us which disappeared from the sky long years before the watchers on the Syrian hills saw a new light in the East, and with hope in their hearts followed it until it halted above a stable in a little Eastern town. These vanished stars are still apparent to us because the speedy beams that once flashed from their glowing hearts have come through such infinite space that they have only impinged upon our vision to-night. We see them at a point in the sky where they no longer are, along a beam that left them before the Christ was born. It is almost beyond belief. The dead past of other worlds than our own cuts into our present. Man's little to-day is the ancient history of the stars : and in the light of the stars man becomes a very little thing.

In the presence of such immensities of time and space the whole of a man's life is reduced to that infinitesimal instant in which the consciousness which is embodied in him cuts through the crest of the ever-rolling wave of Time. That is the whole of man's life : and Time sweeps on, as little disturbed by his coming and going as are the billows of the sea by the little bits of flotsam that dance for a moment on their summit and are gone. Man makes so much of the past, the present, and



the future. But there is no past and no future. If our eyes had clear vision we should know that Time is one and indivisible. The waters of the ocean are continuous, and encircle the earth. Here and there they are cut into by a continent, or stippled by an island, but they form one great whole if looked at from above. And Time is one, though the intellect of man, for his better understanding, has broken it up with many artificial divisions. But to God past, present, future are all one: He sees them all in one completed picture, as one might see the engirdling ocean from the skies. Would you understand these things? Then you must live in a tent and hold communion with the stars.

The crescent moon climbs over the shoulder of the hills and mounts the skies. Strange that that distant orb should be the shepherdess of the waves that wash perpetually the soiled feet of the earth. That fact and a hundred others show that the earth is not an independent world, but a sphere bound in chains to other fragments of the Universe. Cold and aloof, and always showing the same face to the world—for in the long history of mankind no one has ever seen the back of the moon—that dead sphere, with its abysmal caverns and its grey mountain ranges, allures one. It may be some impish trick of fancy, but I imagine, since I looked at her first through my tent door, that the moon is not the dead, insensate thing we have been taught to think. To me she seems possessed of a spirit that is not unsympathetic



towards our poor human strivings. It is a visionary flight of fancy, but I love to think of her as watching us in the darkness. What things she had seen and heard since man first strutted on to the stage of the world ! She has been the witness of his triumphs and defeats, of his love and sufferings. She watched Penelope, sick at heart with year-long waiting, unravelling her interminable web ; and heard Jacob whisper much the same little tender things to Rachel in their tent of camel's-hair, as she can overhear some khaki-clad lover whispering to some English lass to-night by the white gate in an English lane. She looked down upon the armies of Alexander as they pushed onward through the inhospitable deserts of Persia and the mountain fastnesses of Afghanistan till the plains of golden India rolled at their feet. She saw the Imperial Eagle of Rome and the legionaries of Cæsar triumphant from Egypt to the heart of Britain, and she watched that long, famished, stricken column of men, with the little Corsican at its head, wind, like some wounded snake, along the snow-covered road, with Moscow in flames behind it, and famine, death, and the vultures above it and around.

And once, on a night of dool, she rose on a world distraught by the deeds that had shamed the daylight, and looked down upon a hill outside an Eastern town, on whose summit three empty but bloodstained crosses stretched mute but protesting arms to the skies. And once again, as the first rays of the sun were driving her



from the sky, she caught a glimpse of a radiant figure rolling a stone from the mouth of a rock-hewn tomb. Or again, when Imperial Rome was staining her hands with the blood of a new and despised sect, when the arena was a shambles, where the lions' great jaws dripped with human blood, and when Nero's garden was lit by human torches, and human cruelty and human lust raged uncontrolled in palace and *lupanar*, she saw an old bent man, with a ragged beard, steal from a hovel in a mean street, and, hurrying till his breath came in stabbing gasps, escape from the brutal city. She watched him, and guided him as he went along the lone road into the haven of the country, and her beams touched the tears upon his cheeks till they shone like precious stones. A brave man had turned coward, a loyal heart for a second time was betraying its Master, and the moon remembered and was sad. And then, in the hour of the dawn, in the dust of the country road, the Sentinel who never leaves His post challenged the fugitive, not with harsh words, but words of wonder touched with love: "Peter! Whither away?" And the moon saw the old, broken man fall upon his knees before that effulgent Figure and kiss two nail-torn feet, then rise and turn, and, with head held high, walk back to the blood-drenched city and to death. Alexander, Cæsar, Napoleon! Their conquests have crumbled in the dust, as the old moon knows. Their victories were material things, and, like all that is of the earth, they perish. But the seem-



ing failure of the Cross, and the conquest over human weakness and self which the moon witnessed on that Roman road were victories won in the spiritual realm, which time cannot touch, and which endure for ever.

Yes, the moon has seen strange things. She has witnessed the full circle of man's folly ; she knows that in his history the same catastrophes dog the feet of each generation, and that his reiterated " Never again " means no more than, not in this generation, but the next. And, if she would, I think she could explain the reason of his failures. She knows, what man has not yet learned, that the regeneration of humanity must begin in the individual heart. The moon is a wise philosopher. Her every beam is full of wisdom, and she talks most readily to those who dwell in tents.

We have taken tribute of the stars and the moon and the soft night-wind. But earth has other things to offer. There were strange shadows under the pine-trees—things of beauty and mystery. Far away a dog barked, and he was answered by another nearer at hand. A cock sounded his shrill clarion. Nightly at the same hour he tore the silence in twain. I knew it was 1.45 a.m., and the hour of the dawn was yet afar off. He was not saluting the sunrise, but was uttering his challenge—" What of the night, watchman, what of the night ? " And, from far homesteads and near, came back the answer in vibrant notes : " All's well ! The morning cometh." And when



it came the air rang with a score of bugle-calls from as many farm-yards.

Something stirred in the cluster of trees beyond the watercourse. It was a weary mule, marking the slow flight of the hours by pawing the sand.

And then a night-jar called.

Past the corner of the black hut I could see a moving light. I knew that the night Sister was going her rounds. Her lamp is a symbol. It stands for the better side of humanity. It means, in some sort, that man tries to atone for or mitigate the evil he has done. The dancing light passed out of my sight, but I could follow it from ward to ward, and I knew that to some worn man, sick unto death, it came with a message of hope—of hope and cheer, for men are like children, and clutch at straws. The lamp is the mere shadow of a shade beside the meanest star, but it is nearer to them and it is carried in a human hand. And the hand is the hand of a woman, and a light in a woman's hand means help, and pity and love.

The eternal stars looked down and understood. They would continue to peep through my tent-door all night as I lay asleep. When I woke again the earth would be smiling as though she had remembered a happy dream. The perfumed morning air would steal in on noiseless wings, and the sky would be dappled over with tufts of fleecy cloud turned to gold by the light of the rising sun. At such an hour one's soul reached out with an infinite longing to the clouds and the air, and



the vast spaces and the immeasurable sea alike of ocean and of time, and one felt that one's spirit was twin-brother with them all. The walls of my tent grew luminous, and brighter still. Later, I should walk into the sunlight, which was just outside. There is only the canvas screen of death between life and the beyond—and the fuller light is on the other side.

But I was in the zone of war, and every morning I had an early visitor—a little spy in a field-grey uniform. Alert, with noiseless footsteps and swift movement, he would come to the middle of the floor. His keen eyes would roam to every corner, his ears would strain for every sound. Even his nose was impressed into the service of his espionage. He looked at me with unflinching eyes, and I returned his steady stare. He came to spy. He wore the grey uniform of an enemy nation. He was at my mercy. Should I slay him where he stood, or show him clemency? If I had learned anything from the stars it was a lesson on the folly and presumption of mankind. Who was I to judge whether he should live or no? I could not give him back his life, though I might rudely take it from him. In the great scheme of things his niche might be as important as mine, and "mercy is twice blessed." I determined to parley with him, but, as I raised my head, the little grey field-mouse was gone.

A chaffinch hopped to the open door, leapt on to a guy-rope, and, with slanting head, looked in, fixing me with the bead of its eye. But it did not



study me long. In the sand beneath it caught sight of some rich treasure-trove, and, seizing it, the little bird darted off on fluttering wings to her crowded nest.

Such things as these were hidden from me when I lived, immured within brick walls, behind an oaken door. Civilization takes us away from reality, and surrounds us with artificial pomp. But in a tent we get back into touch with Nature, the old Mother; and he who is near the heart of Nature is no immeasurable distance from the heart of God.

In the heat of the summer afternoon I sat in my tent door watching the dance of the butterflies in the vibrant air. They are perpetual and elusive visions of beauty,—for this is a land they love. Sometimes it was only a common white that flitted past—at other times a beauty like a quivering leaf of mottled gold! A common brown rested for an instant on a flower near the Padre's tent, and down between the trees, where the light was tinged with purple, a red admiral passed on rapid wing. With lumbering flight an exquisite "swallow-tail"—a prize for any collector—oscillated by on huge and beautiful wings. The air was full of them. It was difficult to identify them as they fluttered past. The wise collector expresses no opinion till, hot-foot, he has pursued them with his net, captured them, and pinned them on his mounting-board. There one may study them, marvel at their beauty, and say whether this or that is a rare pearl or only a



common moth. As they flit through the quivering light they are things of beauty—flower-petals afloat upon a zephyr.

Pinned down, rigid and dead, they are things of beauty still, but they have lost their chief grace, which is life.

Thoughts are like butterflies. They dance like things of beauty through the atmosphere of the mind, and are gone unless with avid net we pursue and capture them. A prisoned fancy is like a captured butterfly. In seizing it one may bruise its wings and spoil its charm. To fetter it in the cold shackles of a printed phrase is like impaling a butterfly on a pin. And yet, until one has seized it and examined it one cannot tell whether it is a thing of grace or only a common earth-born moth. The most beautiful butterflies are those we never catch. The most beautiful thoughts are those which flash silently through the air of the mind and escape. I had no desire to catch butterflies, for I was no longer fleet of foot. But as I sat in my tent door I tried to catch some of the vagrant creatures of thought that danced through my mind. When prisoned and set out they might prove to be naught but common whites or ordinary browns, or even obtrusive and unwelcome moths. A red admiral or a peacock-coloured swallow-tail was outside the range of my net. Others shall judge; but I alone know that the most beautiful fancies were those which eluded my grasp.



## II

### MARGARINE AND CAFÉ-AU-LAIT

#### I

ON the floor of my tent, within easy reach of my simple bed, stood two wooden boxes. On the end of one was branded the word "Margarine," while the other was adorned with an expansive brown label on which was inscribed the inviting legend "Café-au-lait." Both of them contained food; but it was pabulum for the mind, for they were my book-cases. I have had considerable experience of book-cases, and I know that it is dangerous to diagnose the contents from the outward appearance. Not every book-case whose diamond panes glitter contains gold. That truth I learned early in my professional career. On one occasion it was my lot to spend an expectant night in the sumptuously furnished library of a man who had amassed a considerable fortune in an inconsiderable space of time. Having acquired wealth, he rented a beautiful house in the suburbs and delegated the plenishing of it to one of those firms which undertake contracts of the kind. From cellar to garret his house was complete. He had the right sort of paper on the walls; the proper type of furniture in the rooms;



the accepted species of pictures depended copiously from his cornices ; the right kind of china flaunted its blue and white on many brackets, and the correct assortment of bronzes stood in the right niches. And he had a library. No gentleman's house is complete without one. It was comfortably furnished, and had several inviting leather-covered easy-chairs, with just the right depth of seat and the right curve in the back to make a reader comfortable.

As the expected heir was somewhat reluctant to make his entry into an unkind world, I decided to wait for the night, within easy reach, against an urgent summons from the nurse, and, having the whole house at my disposal, I elected to make myself at home in the library. The seductive chairs and the beautifully carved book-case, with its bright panes, and the sage-coloured silk curtain that hid its contents, allured me. A smart maid brought me coffee in an exquisite cup of Crown Derby, and I dreamed of passing a delightful hour or two with a fascinating book. I opened the book-case. The door followed my hand with that noiseless but smooth and clinging hesitancy which suggests careful adjustment, and my chagrined eyes fell upon empty shelves. I had expected much. I found nothing. No, I do my host an injustice. In one corner were three volumes of *The Racing Calendar* and a paper-backed sensational novel. With a sigh of disappointment I gently closed the door, with a sense of shame that I had looked upon the unwill-



ing nakedness of a neglected book-case. I had learned a lesson on the deceitfulness of outward appearance, from which, since then, I have often profited; and, as I tried to content myself with the ephemeral snippets of the evening paper, I reflected, with some bitterness, that there are other forms of fraud than those which come within the purview of the law.

My tent book-cases were not lordly samples of the cabinet-maker's art, but they served. Let me introduce you to some of their contents. They are, possibly, old friends. "Margarine," the more spacious of the cabinets, contained the books of my craft. They may be passed over without further mention; not one of them is literature. But, resting beside a manual on Bacteriology, was *Lavengro*, and side by side was *The Romany Rye*. No tent-dweller's library is complete without one or both of these strange medleys of fiction and fact. Borrow was himself a tent-dweller. His tent in the dingle, beside the ash-tree, was probably less comfortable than mine; but he loved it, and all who acknowledge his spell have felt the glamour of the nomad's life as he has depicted it. His was a strange personality. Even in his youth he would seem to have been a garrulous gossip. Many men are garrulous, and some men are gossips; it was Borrow's genius that he was able to weave out of his garrulity and his gossip such living representations of men and things. He was a marvellous portrait-painter, whose creatures live in the memory, but if we



examine one of his pen-pictures the secret of his method is hard to discover. I think his success as a delineator is explained by his habit of allowing his characters, most, if not all, of whom were probably actual personages, to reveal themselves. The artist did not stand between the model and the spectator. He simply introduced them to each other, and left the model to unmask and reveal himself even to his unsheathed soul. And with what results ? He has filled the memory of all his readers with a gallery of living personalities. We all know the old man who had seen the King of the Vipers—he told us the story with his own lips ; and in our gallery we often revisit David Haggart, the red-headed Edinburgh drummer-boy ; Murtagh, the Irish card-player, with his strange but probably fictitious history ; the sinister man in black, one of whose vices, in Borrow's eyes, was his preference of " Hollands " to good English ale ; and the old gentleman who in five-and-thirty years of study had acquired some knowledge of Chinese from the inscriptions on his crockery. And who can ever forget the old apple-woman on London Bridge, with her cherished copy of *Moll Flanders* ? Either Borrow had little sense of humour, or he is trying to play a practical joke on his readers when he describes himself as setting out to try to barter the old woman's book for a copy of the Bible.

Then there is Isopel Berners—handsome Amazon, and good companion. The thought of her always intrigues one. As it stands in his writings



the episode in which she plays so large a part seems incomplete. She goes too suddenly and too unsatisfactorily out of Borrow's life, and ours. And what shall be said of his gypsy friends who, in spite of their love of "dukkerin" and petty pilfering, are our friends too? Mr. and Mrs. Petulengro, Tawno Chikno and his wife, and all the rest of them, are to Borrow's pages what Achilles and Hector and Priam were to Homer. These attractive nomads move, living, through his pages, carrying with them a glamour all their own. If you have ever lived in a tent you will understand this. Then there are all his minor characters: his "bruisers," his jockeys, the rat-pit owner, and the hundred and one other strange but vivid denizens of that world in which Borrow loved to move. They all visited me in my tent, and I think I know them well. Even the thimble-rigger came, and, seizing the little table at which I wrote, planted it beside the tent-pole and exclaimed, "Will your Lordship play? Them that finds, wins—them that don't finds, loses." And I took up the challenge and played; and, though I failed to discover the elusive pea, I found something far better under the thimble, and took my winnings in amusement and pleasure.

And once on a glorious morning Lavengro came himself.

I saw him leading his pony and cart up the officers' lines—a man gigantic, swarthy of face, with great, piercing dark eyes, and hair prematurely turned to white.



He tethered his pony to one of my guardian pine-trees, and on my invitation came in. His presence filled the tent, and for half an hour I held high converse with him. He talked, as he wrote, in a torrent, and swept me away on the full stream of his coercive words into the realms of fancy. But I fear he left me in high dudgeon : he was ever a man of moods ! We crossed impassioned swords over the fame and qualities of Sir Walter Scott, and I had no better liquid refreshment to offer him than a cupful of chlorinated water or a glass of war-time wine. He would have none of them. He told me as he went that "good ale is the true and proper drink of Englishmen," and I remembered, as I woke from my dream, that it was his panacea for all human ills.

Borrow had in a very marked degree a power which is possessed by only a few delineators of human types. He makes one feel, after he closes the door through which he has given us a peep at some character or other, that the person does not cease to exist, but goes on living the same life and doing precisely the same things as we observed him engaged upon in that revealing glimpse. We all know, for instance, that the old gentleman who kept touching things to avert the "evil chance" continued to live on obsessed by that painful superstition long after Borrow bade him farewell. This is a mark of genius. To be able to convey to a reader the feeling that when a character falls out of one's pages he has not passed out of being, but continues in the old way, though



our path may never again cross his. If Borrow's characters had been only puppet-presentations they would never have produced this impression.

Borrow's naïve conceit in his own linguistic abilities, which were considerable, and in his philological erudition, which is a less certain quantity, is a vivid feature of his character. Much of his philology was inexact. He was a word-hunter: it is doubtful if he was a word-master, worthy of the title "Lavengro," which Jasper Petulengro bestowed upon him. His philological methods were superficial. If a new word caught his ear, he cast about in the receptacle of his mind for some other word, preferably in Romany, with a somewhat similar sound, and linked the two together, often with no better reason than his imagination could supply. Over and over again he reminds one of little Jack Horner, retrieving plums from his pie. But Borrow's plums are frequently unripe, and set the teeth on edge, or they may even provoke acute internal pain. Part of his education he acquired at the Royal High School in Edinburgh, and by so doing became a citizen of no mean city. There he probably experienced the corrective discipline of the "tawse." Years afterwards he learned, from the old self-taught student of Chinese to whose house he was taken after his fall from his horse, that the Chinese word for a knife is *tau*: and straightway he works out a philological relationship and derives the Scottish *tawse* from the Chinese *tau*, through the French *tailler*, to cut.



I imagine that if he had ventured such an etymological atrocity in the days when he imbibed knowledge in the august Edinburgh seminary he would have run the risk of making further acquaintance with that instrument of discipline.

He learned the word "tanner" from an old apple-woman. His ear connects it with the Latin *tener*, which he links up with *tawno*, the Romany for a sucking child. No correct system of philology was ever built up in such haphazard fashion, and Borrow's claim to be regarded as an authority on the origin and history of words rests upon insecure and ill-laid foundations.

But his title to fame as the mouthpiece and interpreter of gypsy life is undying, and there was much about him that will always endear him to all true Britons. He loved a horse. He loved a fight—a bruising fight in the good old English way, and on occasion he could himself play the manly part with his fists as in his epic combat with "the flaming Tinman."

He loved ardently; he hated bitterly. He was ever ready to sing a pæan on the merits of English ale; and he never lost an opportunity of attacking the Church of Rome. Indeed, if he had been able to deliver a hefty blow with his strong right arm—the "Long Melford," which Isopel Berners taught him, and which laid the Tinman on his back—against that great institution he would have been raised to the seventh heaven of delight.

Gentle reader! Have you a son or a nephew



a tent-dweller ? Send him *Lavengro* and *Romany Rye*, and he will love you for evermore.

Besides Borrow stood Browning—three volumes of him—and one by his gifted wife. Both were perpetual joys : Robert a strong tonic in moments of depression, Elizabeth a gentle and understanding friend when, as they would do, one's thoughts turned longingly to loved ones at home. There, amid the wreckage of war, little passages from some of the longer poems, which one had not had time to read again in their entirety, flashed across the mind like beacons of hope ; and the bell-like lyrics of the little singing maid in " Pippa Passes " dropped their sweetness, like a healing balm, upon one's heart. It was well to be reminded, amid such scenes as those that encompassed one in one's daily work, where a hundred times a day doubt raised its hydra head, that,

" God's in His heaven—  
All's right with the world "—

and to remember, when one felt the blood of some fighting Scottish ancestor tingling in one's veins and wondered whether the Army would not be better served with a bayonet than a stethoscope, that—

" All service is the same with God—  
With God whose puppets, best and worst,  
Are we : there is no last or first."

" Paracelsus " was a help, teaching one—

" To see a good in evil, and a hope  
In ill-success."



And it was good to be reminded that—

“If I stoop  
Into a dark, tremendous sea of cloud  
It is but for a time; I press God's lamp  
Close to my breast; its splendour, soon or late,  
Will pierce the gloom: I shall emerge some day.”

The shorter poems, “Saul,” “Rabbi Ben Ezra”—both old favourites—were a perpetual delight, and some of the ringing lines in “The Lost Leader” made one think of the tragic fall of Germany from the proud place she held, and might have continued to hold among the nations, had she been true to her better self:

“One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,  
One more triumph for devils, and sorrow for angels,  
One wrong more to man, one more insult to God.”

And often, as I walked through our tented wards, I recalled the “Incident of the French Camp” and the proud heroism of just another such lad as those who lie around me:

“‘You're wounded!’ ‘Nay,’ his soldier's pride  
Touched to the quick, he said:  
‘I'm killed, Sire!’ And, his Chief beside,  
Smiling, the boy fell dead.”

It has often been said of Browning's poetry that it is obscure and in places unintelligible: but no one could ever say that the poet earned a reputation for profundity of thought by confusion of language. A generation that was accustomed to look into the clear depths of the smooth-running brook of Tennyson's verse, and see in its pellucid waters all manner of beautiful things, was some-



what perplexed by the turgid and sometimes turbid cataract that poured from Browning's impetuous fountain. But a little patience, a little imagination, and a little careful quest revealed the precious stones that lay hidden beneath the uneven waters.

The gentle and queenly Elizabeth was there chiefly for her "Portuguese Sonnets." It is an eternal evidence of her genius that these melodious and delightful verses are as perfectly applicable to a man's love as to a woman's. They are an enduring monument to the holiness and beauty of human affection. I dared not say how often I conned a special favourite before crawling into my sleeping-bag. I should have laid myself open to a charge of sentimentality, and the War Office had no need of sentiment in its Medical Officers. That is a quality of mind not recognized in official circles; but even a khaki-clad warrior may say to his wife, if she will let him :

"I love thee with the breath,  
Smiles, tears, of all my life ! and, if God choose,  
I shall but love thee better after death."

Many a time, while censoring letters, I have seen the same affection, badly expressed, ill-spelt, and curiously punctuated, struggling to make itself manifest in a scrawl from a wounded soldier to his wife. For love is a force mightier than all the gods of War. And, as no true woman ever destroys a letter in which her man tells her that he loves her, I know that that flimsy bit of paper



will be cherished in some little home in England until, as the poetess said of another letter—

“Its ink has paled  
With lying at my heart that beat too fast.”

In such makeshift book-cases as I possessed there was little opportunity for the orderly arrangement of the books according to their nature. The ruling principle was that of size and adaptability to the niche that was vacant, so the next volume one came across was a slim little green-bound copy of Stevenson's *Memories and Portraits*. It is not his best, but it is representative, and contains more than one favourite.

More justly than Borrow, Stevenson is entitled to the name Lav-engro—for he was in very deed a master of words. He was monarch in his own kingdom, and words were his obedient serfs. He was the loving tyrant of the apt phrase. Some of his genius for verbal clarity and appropriateness he undoubtedly inherited from his father, who, in the closing years of his life, would often leave a spoken sentence unfinished rather than complete the silken vesture of a thought with a border of cotton stuff. But the hereditary aptitude was cultivated to a fine perfection by the meticulous industry of the son. He has told how he practised himself in the art of writing; how he “played the sedulous ape to Hazlitt, to Lamb, to Wordsworth, to Sir Thomas Browne, to Defoe,” and others; and how, with his penny exercise-books, he would sit by the road-side trying to



clothe his visions with fitting words. Many people imagine that the art of writing can be acquired without toil. To some that large beneficence may be vouchsafed as a special gift from the gods ; but for most, as in other walks of life, any degree of excellence is attained only by patient effort. It was Stevenson's gift to be such an artist in words that the care he expended in welding them together was lost sight of, and only the scintillant phrase remained. The awaiting word is rarely the arresting word, unless one's powers of expression are abnormal. And that he had the gift of the arresting word none can deny. The perfection of his diction can often be detected most readily when his writings are read aloud. Some delicate nuance of appropriateness is apt to be lost if the ear does not aid the vision. His written words, well read, tinkle with the sharp note of a stone dropped into a crystal well. The pure beauty of his style is a witness to his knowledge of the Bible. "Cummy" had doubtless seen to that in the days of his delicate childhood.

Some there be who take exception to his occasional employment of an obsolete or almost forgotten word ; but more than once, by the apt use of an archaic word, he imparts to a palatable sentence the bouquet of an old vintage, and thereby increases one's pleasure.

He was more than a maker of phrases or the artificer of polished sentences. He was an expert painter of portraits, as the little book in the box



bears witness. I have often smiled at the living picture of the student who toiled to acquire knowledge, until sleep was banished and his expanding brain absorbed scholastic lore as a sponge sucks up moisture. But, when the testing-time came, he found that the sponge had dried, and that he could not squeeze from it so much as the memory of his name.

And I have loved to con over the character-study of "An old Scotch Gardener," and, knowing the type, recognize the brilliancy of the portraiture, and I think I have known a man of whom it might be said, as Stevenson has said it of his old friend the sheriff of Dumbartonshire, that he had "a soul like an ancient violin, so subdued to harmony, responding to a touch in music." But, best of all, in this little book I love "The Manse"—with its quaint and kindly picture of his grandfather, austere yet loving, an awe-inspiring Spartan minister of the old Scotch breed, yet tender withal. Only the light-handed wit of Stevenson could suggest, without offence, that primitive instincts inherited from some ancestor, remote and "probably arboreal," frisked and gambolled and were firmly trodden down behind the outwardly grave eyes of this dignified old divine.

The notes of the "Last Post" trailed into silence over the darkened camp, and I turned in. But I still had time for a pipeful of "John Cotton" and a page or two of Stevenson.

They make an admirable blend.



## II

There is an element of incongruity in discovering Stevenson flanked by La Rochefoucauld, but the war has given many a man strange stable companions. Side by side with Stevenson were two volumes containing the *Maxims*. One was a small, abbreviated English edition: the other, garish in its covering of mustard-coloured paper, was a complete French edition. The cynicisms of the Duke are like a piquant sauce: they lend a flavour to life which stimulates the palate jaded by the unrealities of convention, and since the war they have assumed a new value. They help materially in acquiring an understanding of French character. In England the character of the French people is understood very imperfectly. We are accustomed to regard them as a charming, vivacious, somewhat emotional folk, given to sentiment, with a genius for the finer arts and a consuming fire of patriotism in their breasts. In some points such a description holds good, in others it is woefully wrong. Their charm, their vivacity, their fine patriotism, and their artistic gifts no one will deny. But they are much less sentimental than the English, and little, if any, more the creatures of emotion. They are endowed with a keen and relentless gift of logic which is denied to us. They love to lay bare the roots of things, and to trace emotions to their source. Some of their novelists will dissect a beautiful emotion till nothing is left but a dis-



articulated heap of unlovely bones. As for sentiment, they never permit it to blunt the keen edge of their common sense. When a Frenchman, or even a French market-woman, enters into a bargain, sentiment rarely, if ever, plays a part.

We have no genius for hate; the French have this unlovely quality, and to it may be traced the many crimes of jealousy which disfigure their social life.

They are a people given to introspection.

La Rochefoucauld knew his fellow-countrymen. He also knew himself, and it is because his maxims have, for the most part, the tang of truth that they have so well withstood the corroding influence of time. If one rely entirely upon the Duke for a knowledge of the French he will be apt to fall into error. The wisdom gathered from his pages must be corrected by personal observation, or by the study of other French writers, for he tended to impart to his reflections a cynic flavour that occasionally renders them mordant. He lived in an age and atmosphere of intrigue, which may reasonably account for the caustic element in his philosophy. He lowered his dredge into the deep sea of the human heart and found there oozy slime, and crawling things. And if, by chance, he retrieved a pearl from the depths, he either found a flaw in it or set it in a poisoned ring. Self-love, self-love, and again self-love seemed to him to be the chief motive underlying all human action.

The following samples, taken haphazard from



his *Maxims*, will show his style and temper. I shall give the originals, and a free rendering into English, but those who are well acquainted with French will see in the actual words of the author delicate nuances of expression and intention that no translation can convey.

Here is a subtle jibe at humanity's opinion of itself :

*Quelque bien qu'on nous dise de nous, on ne nous apprend rien de nouveau,*"—which being interpreted, means that the best the world can tell us of ourselves conveys no news to us ; and this, which according to Sterne "deserves to be written in letters of gold," is as sharp as a two-edged sword :

"*La gravité est un mystère du corps inventé pour cacher les défauts de l'esprit.*"—Gravity is camouflage designed to conceal the defects of the mind.

It is difficult to estimate whether cynicism or honesty lurks behind this maxim : "*Nous aurions souvent honte de nos plus belles actions si le monde voyait tous les motifs qui les produisent.*"—We should often be ashamed of our noblest deeds if the world could see the motives behind them.

The shrewd observer of human nature lurks behind this : "*Nous pardonnons aisément à nos amis les défauts qui ne nous regardent pas.*"—We readily overlook in our friends the bad qualities which do not affect us. And here speaks the commentator of self-love : "*Il y a dans la jalousie plus d'amour-propre que d'amour.*"—In jealousy there is more *amour-propre* than love. And once



again :—" *Nous ne ressentons nos biens et nos maux qu'à proportion de notre amour-propre.*"—Good or evil fortune affects us only in proportion to our self-esteem.

There is a burning sarcasm in the following, and we can imagine some reticent but testy old gentleman desiring to cast it in the teeth of some youthful but ill-informed demagogue :—" *La confiance fournit plus à la conversation que l'esprit.*"—In conversation cocksureness counts for more than intellect.

One might continue these quotations for several pages, but I shall content myself with culling two more. This is almost cruel, but it is typical of the mordant and cynical humour of its author : " *Les vieillards aiment à donner de bons préceptes pour se consoler de n'être plus en état de donner de mauvais exemples.*"—The old love to give good advice to make up for their inability to set bad examples.

As a Scotsman, whose rolling "burr" has been somewhat softened by residence south of the border, the following maxim always appeals to me : " *L'accent du pays où l'on est né demeure dans l'esprit et dans le cœur comme dans le langage.*"—The accent of one's country is one of mind and heart as well as tongue.

I shall not quote any of La Rochefoucauld's maxims on woman or on love. When a Frenchman writes on these subjects he does so either with a delicate spirituality, with a savour of unpleasantness, or with abominable nastiness. The



Duke's opinions on these subjects were, for the most part, frankly unwholesome. He would appear to have had a somewhat low opinion of woman, which may be explained by the fact that, as I have already said, he lived in an age of intrigue, and many of the women with whom he came in contact were mistresses of that art. But yet he knew some good women, and was the acknowledged friend of Madame de Sévigné, who with her penetrating vision saw behind the mask of his cynicism, and paid a beautiful tribute to his character when she wrote of him in the midst of heavy domestic trial: "I saw his naked heart on that cruel occasion, and his courage, his merit, his tenderness and good sense surpassed all I ever met with."

One is constrained to wonder whether all his cynicism was not a pose. Those who knew him best regarded him as a loyal, affectionate, and disinterested friend, and when he died he was deeply mourned. So we are tempted to believe that his heart was at bottom better than the dredgings he found there, and his love for his fellow-men was none the less real because it was obscured by his cynicism.

The *Maxims* should be studied by all who wish to understand human nature. I keep them by me that from their pages I may add a pure culture of the *Bacillus Bulgaricus* to the milk of human kindness, lest it become sickly sweet.

Two volumes of Voltaire came next—his *Dictionary of Philosophy* and a book of extracts,



well-chosen and representative. I look into his dictionary from time to time when I feel that a mental tonic is required. A page or two irritates me because his views on many of the things that one holds dearest are bitterly opposed to one's own. But, after the irritation has wakened one from a condition of mental torpor into a state of lively displeasure, one can enjoy a rapier bout with the "brilliant Frenchman." He is a skilful antagonist, and one had need to be very sure of the efficacy of his guard or he will hear his adversary, with malignant laughter in his gleaming eyes, cry "*touché*" when he penetrates beyond one's defence. He fights keenly, with the button off, and the point of his rapier is sometimes poisoned with sophisms, and may produce a wound that will fester to the soul's grievous hurt. In his pages one sees over and over again in full operation that cold, relentless logic which is so peculiarly a possession of the French. He shrinks from no conclusion to which his reason leads him ; but he falls into a trap, set on the highway of Time, for all wayfarers. He founds his conclusions on deductions made from the sum-total of knowledge accessible to him. But knowledge grows with the years, and the men of no one age have access to the whole knowledge of the truth. Like La Rochefoucauld, whose book of maxims he held in high esteem, he was a master of satire. Like other jewels, the diamonds of truth sometimes sparkle most brightly in a claw-setting—but on occasion the claw may wound.



To Voltaire's enforced exile in England we owe his *Lettres Philosophiques, ou Lettres Anglaises*, which so upset the staid self-complacency and *amour-propre* of our ancestors that the book was publicly burned by the common executioner. To read those letters in an army tent in France, in those days of mutual understanding, was to be a little surprised at the commotion they produced. There is an immense amount of truth in them, salted with much wit ; but the stolid Briton of that age had no desire to see himself through the eyes of a Frenchman, however brilliant, and felt sorely hurt.

On our religious divisions, which were a perpetual wonder in our camp, where Padres of all denominations lived in closest amity, he had many caustic things to say. Let him speak for himself : “ *Un Anglais, comme homme libre, va au ciel par le chemin qui lui plait,*” and “ *S'il n'y avait en Angleterre qu'une religion, son despotisme serait à craindre : s'il n'y en avait que deux, elles se couperaient la gorge : mais il y en a trente, et elles vivent en paix et heureuses.*”

Here is a flower, all the sweeter because it comes from the garden of Voltaire, which in these days we may wear proudly in our coats : “ *Ce peuple n'est pas seulement jaloux de sa liberté, il l'est encore de celle des autres.*”

If Voltaire said bitter things about us, and in doing so seemed bent on shattering some of our most cherished beliefs, if he exposed our pretentiousness, and sought to prick the airy bubbles



of some of our philosophers, if he laughed at our hypocrisies, and considered us superficial, he was just enough to see that we loved liberty for itself, and were anxious that others should be equally free.

Voltaire said of La Rochefoucauld's work that it was not so much a book as the materials for a book. This is a criticism that might justly be applied to the next volume in my modest casket—*Les Pensées* of Blaise Pascal. Pascal was born ten years after La Rochefoucauld, and died nearly twenty years before him. They were, therefore, contemporaries, but they looked at life from points of view that were as distant from each other as the poles. Yet in the work of these three men—La Rochefoucauld, Pascal, and Voltaire—we find the same spirit of self-examination, the same analytical qualities, and the same relentless logic.

Eight years before his death Pascal had a narrow escape from a serious accident. This marked a turning-point in his life. Like St. Paul on the road to Damascus, he heard the voice of God, and ever afterward his life was devoted to the practice of charity and self-denial, and to the cultivation of the flowers in the garden of his soul. Some five years before his death, which occurred in 1662 after prolonged ill-health and great suffering, he had begun to make notes and memoranda for a great work in defence of the Christian faith. Of his projected masterpiece nothing remains but these notes, which constitute the immortal *Pensées*. One may legitimately wonder whether the pro-



jected apologia, if it had ever seen completion, would have attained a fame so widespread or a love so great as these detached thoughts have secured. I imagine it would not: and the rich treasure of these jewels of study, touched with the light of devotion, would have been buried in the musty pages of cumbrous tomes and for ever forgotten.

Like an artist bent on constructing some beautiful cathedral window, he gathered together a multitude of fragments of coloured glass—ruby and golden, purple and green and blue. But he did not live to set the pieces in their places and perfect the window. The coloured fragments have lain ever since in a heap, with an empty window above them; and many a man and woman has come to that thesaurus of glittering fragments, and taken from it a piece that has brought joy to their hearts, who would have passed the completed window by, with a casual glance.

Like La Rochefoucauld, Pascal was convinced that *amour-propre* was a ruling motive in the human heart:—"Vanity is so anchored in the heart of man that a soldier, a soldier's servant, a cook, a porter, brags and wishes to have his admirers. Even philosophers wish for them." Was it cynicism, or pity for the frailty of man that made him say, "Man is only disguise, falsehood, and hypocrisy both in himself and in regard to others," and, "Those who do not love the truth take as a pretext that it is disputed and that as multitude deny it"?



In these examples, which might be multiplied considerably, there is as much biting sarcasm as in the most acrid maxims of La Rochefoucauld. Indeed, Voltaire accused Pascal of attributing to humanity in general qualities to be found only in a few.

But Pascal's opinion of human character sprang from a different source than La Rochefoucauld's. Did he not say, "The more light we have, the more greatness and the more baseness we discover in man"? La Rochefoucauld was frankly cynical: while Pascal, looking into the human heart with a spiritual eye, found, like the psalmist and Job, much there that is displeasing to God; and, if he expressed his conclusions in terse and caustic terms, it was not from any lack of love for humanity but from a greater love for God. La Rochefoucauld had no spiritual vision, therefore Voltaire could understand him. He admired his gibes at humanity because they were the offspring of cynicism; but Pascal's strictures he could not condone because they were the children of religious conviction, and conviction, in the domain of morals, he was not able to appreciate. Pascal felt he dared not compromise in the face of the moral law of God, and Voltaire had no clue to help him to grasp such an attitude of mind. In praising the *Maxims* and vituperating the *Pensées* Voltaire demonstrated his own spiritual blindness. Here is a thought to which Voltaire had no key: "There is nothing on earth that does not show either the wretchedness of man, or the



mercy of God ; either the weakness of man without God, or the strength of man with God." The mind of Pascal was spiritually directed, while the minds of the Duke and of Voltaire hardly ever soared above the things of this earth. They had many things in common, for all were kindled by the French genius and dealt with life and humanity in the same way, though from somewhat different angles. Pascal distrusted the reason as a guide : for Voltaire it was the only light the world had to offer. Of the three, only Pascal realized the existence of the moral law, and acknowledged that both he and his fellow-men had been false to its teachings ; and it was this recognition of what lay behind all the defects in human character that made Pascal appear to be a cynic.

Each has bequeathed to mankind treasures of the mind that will not be let die ; but, in days of anxiety and stress, the thoughts of Pascal rather than the maxims of La Rochefoucauld or the philosophy of Voltaire will supply man's soul with bread to live on, and help him to endure.

Book-lovers who know Paris will remember the El Dorado of the Quais, where for nearly a mile along the parapet of the wall that bounds the left bank of the Seine are laid out, for leisurely examination and for sale, innumerable old books in many languages. Here the treasure-hunter may become rich beyond his dreams. Even in war-time the old men and women were sitting on their little stools by the kerb-stone, with one eye on their wares and the other on any possible pur-



chaser. And, with Paris under shell-fire, purchasers seemed to be as numerous as ever. There, on a day when "Big Bertha" was intermittently sending her messages of far-flung hate into the centre of the city, I picked up for a few coppers an excellently preserved copy of Church's translation of the "Euthyphron," "Apology," "Crito" and "Phædo" of Plato, under the title of *The Trial and Death of Socrates*. It is fitting that this book should stand beside the works of La Rochefoucauld, Voltaire, and Pascal, for, though separated in time by some two thousand years, all these men had much in common. All were students of their own souls; all were questioners of motive; all were seekers after the truth; all sought to fathom human nature. They had different advantages in birth, in education, and in opportunity; but the greatest of them all was the little Athenian, unkempt, ill-dressed, possibly unwashed, who spent his days at the street-corners of his beloved city, or in the gymnasia or the market-place, wherever he could find most people, urgent upon his perpetual quest for the truth.

In days of war it was pleasant to remember that, though Socrates was a philosopher, he had also been a private soldier, called upon to endure all the worst privations of a military life. It is on record that he surpassed all his comrades in his capacity for enduring the hardships of a winter campaign. He won the Victoria Cross of his day, but ceded it to another, and with his companion



Laches he fought a brave and unyielding rear-guard action when the Thebans routed the Athenians. He was, therefore, a man of action as well as a man of thought; but it is because he was a man of faith, which is one of the few gifts that man can make to God, that he has won a title to enduring fame. A pagan, he can teach many Christians lessons in conduct and in moral courage. He believed firmly in a dæmonic, or, as we should say, a spiritual guidance, and he tried to order his life in accordance with the inspiration thus vouchsafed to him. Unlike some other pagan philosophers, such as Seneca, his conduct squared with his profession. St. Paul himself has not surpassed some of the profound thoughts of Socrates, touched as they were with a fine moral beauty which has made them not the possessions of an age, but of all time. The grace of God may flow through a pagan's heart. I think it was to be found in this ugly little Athenian.

I turned most often to the "Phædo." Not even the memory that, as a schoolboy, he had to wrestle with the intricacies of this great dialogue can ever kill one's love for it. And here, within sight of tents where men were facing death, each according to his faith or his lack of it, the account of the last brave hours of Socrates was an abiding consolation. I saw him, as Phædo saw him, sitting on his bed in the early fateful morning, rubbing his leg where the fetters had chafed it. That little human touch made the whole picture real. I heard his confident and unflinching voice explain-



ing the logical basis of his faith in God and in the deathlessness of the soul; I saw him when the sun was still upon the hills—such hills as was visible through the triangle of my tent door—cheerfully taking the poisoned cup and drinking it to the dregs, and at the end I saw him lying cold and dead, as I have seen many another brave soldier, with eyes closed, but come at last to a clear and enduring knowledge of the truth.

### III

In every library there are books which may not in themselves be of great value, but which are enhanced in worth by some association linked to them. A bibliophile would doubtless set high value on Milton's copy of Homer, or on any volume which Johnson ever owned. The history of any book a man possesses, if it has a history, and did not come to his shelves hot-foot from the press, imparts to the volume a fragrance and flavour it would otherwise lack. Not far from *The Trial and Death of Socrates* was a coverless, tattered, somewhat grimy reprint of one of the greatest books in the world—*The Pilgrim's Progress*. This copy had a mysterious history, and, besides, the tinker's marvellous allegory is for me a centre round which are gathered some of the tenderest memories of childhood.

On an inhospitable winter's evening duty took me into one of the huts where the official work of the hospital was performed—where the coils of red



tape were unravelled and straightened out. As I stood at the telephone my eyes fell upon the half-empty coal-bucket, and among its contents I saw a partially buried book. The sight of a book is always a keen temptation to me. Had I been Adam, and had the fateful tree been loaded with books instead of fruit I should have required no serpent to tempt me, but would have succumbed to temptation long before Eve came to the garden. With the telephone-receiver still at my ear, I stooped down and picked from among the coals *The Pilgrim's Progress*. How it had come there no one could tell me. The office corporal was at a loss. There was no name upon the book, and no means of discovering its former owner: so, as "finding things" is a legitimate method of increasing one's possessions in an encampment, I appropriated the volume with no prick of conscience, and it occupied a place of honour among the other volumes in *Café-au-lait*. Its disreputable appearance was atoned for by the pure gold of its contents. It looked like what it was—a tinker's book. But Bunyan was no ordinary tinker, and when he dreamed his dream he made use of finer stuff than the metal of his craft.

But there was another reason which made me value this book. When I looked into its pages the years fell from my shoulders like the pilgrim's burden, and I was once more a child.

It was a Scottish Sabbath morning. There was a Sabbath stillness in the air of the manse. The ordinary tasks and amusements of the week had



all been laid aside. Even the crow of the cock and the exultant cackle of the hens had in them a quality of Sabbath restraint. My mother, neatly but simply dressed as became a minister's wife, was seated near a window with a wonderful book in her hand, gorgeous with splendid pictures, and I was standing by her knee spelling out the magic words of the deathless allegory. I was an unwilling pupil, a veritable Mr. Obstinate, for in my rebel heart I had a shrewd suspicion that this new experience was a cunning artifice whereby the unwelcome lessons of the week had been carried into the sanctity of the Sabbath,—and, on principle, I objected. I saw the beautiful oval face lit with a smile, and remember the twinkle in the blue-grey eyes. My mother could read the feelings in my heart,—for was I not bone of her bone and blood of her blood, and the vision of a wise mother into the young hearts of her children is clear as the vision of God. I stumbled on, with many slips and much prompting, and then I was startled into interest. This was no ordinary school-book with inept statements about the cat which caught the rat: Christian and Pliable had fallen into the Slough of Despond! I knew what that was. Many a black dog had I seen upon a Scottish moor. This book was alive! Things happened in it! It was a book of adventure!—and I was reading it on Sabbath! What glorious good fortune! The book was worth reading! I was all anxiety and at strained attention until Christian, with the aid of Mr. Help, was once



again upon sound earth, and then the book was laid aside until the dawn of the next Sabbath, when I was eager to discover what further adventures befell the Pilgrim. That strange man with the heavy burden on his back had become for me a living personality, and I was filled with a lively curiosity as to his journey and its issue. His was a pilgrimage of great adventures and constant surprises, but, unfortunately, as I then thought, there were dreary pages of unattractive print inset with a curious perversity between the adventures, like the colloquy with Mr. Worldly Wiseman and Mr. By-ends, and those other loquacious wayfarers whom the Pilgrim met; and through these wearisome passages I picked my way slowly. But always in my heart there was the hope of still more thrilling episodes, and never was the hope disappointed. There were strange but interesting houses to visit, like the Interpreter's; there were hard hills to struggle up like the hill Difficulty; but beyond there was a pleasant arbour which interested me not at all, and a narrow passage with roaring lions chained in it that gripped me heart and soul. And then there was the grim but splendid fight with Apollyon—as exciting as St. George's with the dragon. And after that, for the rich stores of the wonderful book were far from being exhausted, there was the sombre and awful Valley of the Shadow, with the cave of the Giant at the farther end, with its blood and bones and mangled bodies of men. And then there was Vanity Fair, where Christian and



Faithful were arrested, and where Faithful, after the mockery of a trial, was tortured and burned to death. Here, if I remember rightly, I punctuated the narration with a tear, and who will blame me ?

But the incident that thrilled me most was the capture of Pilgrim and Hopeful, asleep in his grounds, by Giant Despair. Many years afterwards, in a great Continental Zoological Garden, I met Giant Despair. He was a mighty and ferocious orang-outang, and, as I looked at him, safe behind the iron bars of his cage, I felt a flash of recognition pass through my mind. The creature was familiar : where had I seen him before ? And out of her archives memory brought the picture : my childish conception of the Giant was a replica of the brute before me.

The four days the pilgrims spent in his noisome dungeon were for me a period of blood-curdling excitement. By right, as the episode was a long one, it should have required two Sundays to follow it to its end ; but, as a special privilege, I was allowed to complete it on the Sunday evening, and fell asleep with the confident assurance that Christian and his companion were safely out of harm's way, thanks to the magic key, and far beyond the reach of the bloodthirsty Ogre, among the good shepherds on the Delectable Mountains. They were nearing the end of the journey now ; they were within sight of the City to which they were travelling, and the adventures became fewer and the long talks with other wayfarers more



tedious. But there was always the hope of further adventurous happenings. At the end there was the River, which, ever since, has been to me as real as the winding Nith, and the long last mile in the company of the shining men as they ascended the great hill together up to the City with its streets of gold, and all its bells ringing for joy.

Was there ever such another book as this? The whole pilgrimage was intensely real to me. Nor is this to be wondered at. To an infinitely greater degree than their elders know, children live in a world of their own—a world of make-believe. To them the unreal is often more intensely actual than the real; their day-dreams are as substantial as their meals. By nature they are dowered with the vision which enables them to understand the language of allegory, and the dream of the Bedford tinker, and all the things he saw in his dream, are for them clothed upon with the vesture of reality. To extract all the richest treasure from "The Pilgrim" one must make acquaintance with the book in one's childhood. It still has gold to offer us in middle life, but we will unearth that gold with a finer zest if we have first learned in our childhood the veins in which it lies hid.

To have been led to read again *The Pilgrim's Progress* in war-time by its fortuitous discovery in a coal-box was an experience rich in instruction. I learned something that otherwise I should have missed, for I discovered that the immortal allegory was peculiarly applicable to our



experiences as a nation during the years of war. I should not go the length of saying that before the war we were living in the City of Destruction, but, without unfairness, I think it may be said that we were living on the outskirts of Vanity Fair. Our ideals were wrong, and we had come to put fictitious values on the things which do not matter. And then, like a thunder-clap, the war burst upon us, and we became our own men again. Since that day we have been on a pilgrimage. We passed early, like the Pilgrim, through the Slough of Despond; we wandered into by-paths instead of keeping to the straight road; we listened to Mr. Worldly Wiseman, and were led astray by his advice; and we passed through the house of the Interpreter. It was there we learned that this was to be no war of a winter season, but a war against evil and a struggle for our national existence. And at the house of the Interpreter, where the dark was made plain for us, we saw "a man of a very stout countenance," aye, a million such, approach the man with the book and the ink-horn and say, "Set down my name, sir," and then, weapon in hand, leap upon the armed men who stood over against them. We had our Hill Difficulty to climb—more than once; we passed through the Valley of Humiliation, and we found right in our path no mere ordinary opponent, but Apollyon himself, breathing fire and smoke from his belly.

We have lain in the dungeons of Doubting Castle, but, thank God, we have never struck our



flag to Giant Despair ; and now we are on the slopes of the Delectable Mountains and are come to the City of Peace. And if we may compare the long travail of the nation to a pilgrimage, we may recognize in every one of our soldiers who has laid down his life in this war a pilgrim. He braved appalling dangers to attain an ideal. And nowhere, outside of the Scriptures, can one find a more becoming epitaph for such an one than in the words of Bunyan, majestic in their simplicity : " My marks and scars I carry with me, to be a witness for me, that I have fought His battles who now will be my rewarder. . . . So he passed over, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side."

The appeal of poetry, always insistent for any one who can find pleasure in it, becomes charged with a fresh keenness in the midst of war. For this there are several reasons. Poetry represents the quintessence of human emotion, and in time of war all the emotions are stirred to their depths. Then, all that poetry stands for, its matchless ideals, the beauties it enshrines, are in direct antithesis to the hideousness and brutality of war—so the contrast between the two increases the interest of the more beautiful. In all true poetry there is a well for the refreshment of the spirit, and the tired and weary soul, hard buffeted and perplexed by the happenings of war, turns to poetry for solace, and finds in its pure waters comfort and enjoyment.

I spent moments of unforgettable pleasure with



Tennyson, whose poems stood beside Bunyan's great allegory. For some reason Tennyson has not the same vogue as he had a decade ago, but I am confident that this is only a passing fluctuation in taste and that ere long he will once more come into his kingdom. I have not yet found any one to disestablish him from my affection.

It is well to be reminded, as we are in "In Memoriam," that there is a purpose in life even though we can perceive it but dimly, and to be able to trust that—

"Somehow good  
Will be the final goal of ill"

is to have found an inspiration for unwavering confidence. And in those black hours when even an optimist tends to sink to the nadir of hope we may well be driven to—

. . . "Stretch lame hands of faith, and grope  
And gather dust and chaff, and call  
To what I feel is Lord of all,  
And faintly trust the larger hope."

The "Princess," the "Idylls," "Maud," and many of the shorter poems are capable of nourishing hearts and souls that in the atmosphere of war are starved of much that is best and most beautiful in life. And it was a joy to remember, when one read of some gallant fight carried on by one of our torpedo-craft, or by a merchantman or even a trawler against overwhelming odds, that the proud spirit of Sir Richard Grenville was incorporate in every one of our sailors:—



“ We have fought such a fight for a day and a night  
As may never be fought again !  
We have won great glory, my men !  
And a day less or more  
At sea or ashore  
We die—does it matter when ? ”

There is the authentic ring of the British Navy about that. Let the battered Mole of Zeebrugge give answer.

There is a note of tragedy, almost pure Grecian in its intensity and reserve, about the last two lines of this great ballad, and I can never read them without pride—pride that is near to tears :—

“ And the little *Revenge* herself went down by the island crag  
To be lost evermore in the main.”

As no soldier was allowed to take an indefinite amount of kit abroad with him one's library was strictly limited, but a good anthology does not take up much space, and may be the source of boundless pleasure.

I had two small collections of verse with me, and they completed that portion of my tent library that may be classed as literature. One was a tiny collection of lyric poems, small in compass and light in weight—the kind of book one may slip into a pocket and extract a gem from in an odd moment. I opened it at random, and in a moment I was singing with Burns. Or I turned over the pages and stumbled on Gray's “Elegy,” that quiet, reflective picture of a country God's acre,—and I thought of those other acres in that fair land of France, which are a witness that—



“The paths of glory lead but to the grave.”

No collection of English verse is complete without Keats's “Ode to a Grecian Urn,” which reminds us, lest we forget, that what is beautiful outlives the little span of human life and conveys its message of truth to generations yet unborn; while the “Ode to a Nightingale” drops its cool and refreshing balm upon the fevered heart.

Shelley's “West Wind” and his “Ode to a Skylark” bring tender and delightful memories of home to all sojourners in an alien clime; while Wordsworth's “Intimations of Immortality,” read in the new and lurid light of war, palpitates with fresh meaning, and can give—

“Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.”

My second anthology was Manning Foster's little book, *Blessed are the Dead*. In it one can find, excellently arranged, all the wisdom of the ages crystallized into splendid language, on the problems of death and immortality. With their keen spiritual vision, the poets have always been the apostles of hope and the prophets of man's hereafter. And here we discover running through the selections, which range through all time, and are culled from the literature of many countries, a note of glad and confident assurance. David, the sweet singer of Israel, the writer of the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ*, Milton, Shelley, every one of them sounds the same clarion note of triumphant hope: “I have set the Lord always before me: for He is on my right hand, therefore I shall not fall.



Wherefore my heart was glad, and my glory rejoiceth : my flesh also shall rest in hope."

Here is a similar prophetic confidence from the lips of the Hindu poet :—

"Never the spirit was born : the spirit shall cease to be never ;

Never was time it was not ; End and Beginning are dreams ;

Birthless and deathless and changeless remaineth the spirit for ever.

Death hath not touched it at all, dead though the house of it seems."

I need not quote from Milton. His trumpet tones of resolute assurance have rung down the centuries ; but it is well to remember that Shelley, brilliant unbeliever though he was, had a spiritual instinct that could transcend all his other thoughts :

"Dust to the dust ! but the pure spirit shall flow  
Back to the burning fountain whence it came,  
A portion of the Eternal, which must glow  
Through time and change unquenchably the same."

Always I slipped this beautiful anthology back into its vacant place reverently. It is full of wisdom, of comfort, and of high hope ; and in those days we had need of such things.



### III

#### COURAGE

**D**URING the Great War, the safety of our Empire depended on the courage of our clerks. After the hard-bitten men of our Regular Forces—the contemptible little army of the Kaiser's scorn—were worn down, unconquered, but still worn down, by the attrition of the incessant waves of the German hordes, the enemy was held at bay, and at last driven back, by an army of amateurs. I walked through the wards of the hospital, and among the hundreds of patients there found men of various occupations, but a professional soldier rarely or never. The professional soldiers for the most part had already made the great sacrifice, or had sustained such formidable wounds as to be no longer fit to be classed as effectives. The Army at the close of the War was representative of the nation as a whole, and, as we are a people given to commerce, it consisted of men in whose blood the love of peace was a tradition, and the distaste for war almost a religion. Clerks, warehousemen, porters, newsboys, labourers, artisans, and shop-assistants—from such unlikely material have our heroes sprung. Let us take two men in adjacent beds—we shall choose



them at random. In the days of peace one was a bank-clerk, an occupation not lucrative but respectable, dignified and not arduous. Probably he lived in the suburbs, and led a more or less colourless existence, his chief dissipations being an occasional glass of beer and a night at a music-hall, and the sternest conflict in which he ever played a part was the semi-final in the mixed doubles of a suburban tennis-tournament. His hospital neighbour was in civil life a grocer's assistant, who spent his days selling soap and split-peas, or weighing sugar and discussing the relative merits of tea at 1s. 4d. or 1s. 6d. a pound with an enquiring housewife. His most dexterous physical feat was the skill with which he snapped over his fingers the string with which he tied the parcels ; his sole knowledge of conflict was derived from the weekly football match in which he took violent part as a spectator ; and the only weapon that he could wield was the wooden butter-knife.

Brought up as they were in surroundings of comparative, though not luxurious, comfort, there was nothing in the daily avocations of these men to teach them to endure hardness. The circumstances of their lives made no demands upon their physical courage, and, unless they happened to be football-players, or devoted to roller-skating, they were never exposed to the risk of buffetings or broken bones. Their lives were sheltered under the canopy of modern civilization.

As a contrast, let us think of the upbringing and surroundings of the men who stormed the breach



at Badajos, or who fought at Waterloo. In Wellington's own words, they were "the scum of the earth"; men hardened by privations in their youth; tempered to a sterner hardness by the brutality of the times in which they lived, and inured to suffering by the awful discipline to which they were subjected. They belonged to an age when our civilization was largely a veneer; when prince and peer and commoner flocked to witness a prize-fight, without gloves, between iron-fisted bruisers—the Cribbs, the Belchers, the "savage Sheltons," the terrible Randalls, and the bulldog Hudsons upon whom Borrow loved to dilate. They were the children of a time when life had fewer amenities and more hardships. By birth, by nurture, by education, by taste in sport, and by all the ancillary circumstances of life, they were separated by an immense gulf from the men who have fought so gallantly for us in this war. Yet, brave as our soldiers who fought in the Peninsular and Napoleonic wars proved themselves to be, their heroism sinks by comparison into a little thing when contrasted with the endurance and courage of their successors of this age.

Never before in the bloodstained history of human kind had men been subjected to such terrific artillery bombardments. All the resources of science had been conscripted to make war more brutal and more deadly. Machine-guns vomited incalculable streams of bullets against the advancing infantry; flame-throwers threatened to incinerate them alive; bombs or grenades



killed or maimed a score of men with deadly accuracy ; and, like “ the pestilence that walketh in darkness,” poison gas crept insidiously into the trenches to take men by the throat ; while aeroplanes rained death from the skies, and the very earth under their feet might yawn with frightful reverberation, and swallow up their mangled and mutilated bodies. Horror and death assailed the soldier on every side ; but he showed an indomitable pluck, and an invincible courage, as did his predecessors of a century ago.

The circumstances have changed : the spirit remains the same.

It is interesting to consider some of the factors that had been at work in producing from such material men capable of bravery so great,—courage which eclipses all records of the valour or feats of arms wrought by the warriors of ancient Greece and Rome, whose names have come down to us in song and story.

We must at once admit that the material of our otiose days before the war, though apparently unpromising, had in it the nucleus of this surpassing fortitude. The men were made of the right stuff, but the conditions of their lives were not such as to reveal the fine splendour of their manhood. If we think of our national history we shall discover whence this nucleus of high fighting quality was derived. Not always has our island home been inviolate. The legions of Cæsar, the savage warriors from Denmark, and the brave knights of the Conqueror, all fought with and



defeated our ancestors. But, with that curious faculty which is one of the great gifts of our race, we absorbed all of our conquerors who remained long enough on our shores, and their martial traditions became blended with our own and still flow in our blood. Then, further, as Bannockburn and Flodden Field can tell, we have had many a hard-fought battle among ourselves. So that fighting was, apparently, a social habit of our ancestors, and when a social habit has been practised long enough by any species of animals it becomes engrained in their constitution and is handed on by heredity. It is generally recognized that no regiments in our Army can face cold steel with such intrepid firmness as the Highlanders. This great quality they owe to their ancestors, who fought at close quarters with targe and claymore, and who had schooled themselves through many generations to rush with unflinching heart to meet the flashing blade. Their fearlessness in such a combat has passed to their descendants. Even civilization could not completely destroy the old spirit, though it might conceal it under its many artificialities: and, as every man is, in Emerson's words, "a quotation from all his ancestors," that obliging bank-clerk or that innocuous young man with the butter-knife may, now and then, in days of peace have felt surging within him the fierce and bloodthirsty spirit of some gigantic berserker, or, in imagination, with couched lance ridden atilt in the knightly Norman way.



The material, therefore, had the proper traditions behind it. The root of the tree was set in fields of martial glory, and, more than once, it had been watered with blood. It would have been strange if the fruit of the branches were not red at the core. Such was the stuff on which the Army had to work, with results such as few people could have foreseen, and upon which the historians of future ages will dilate with pride.

The first thing a soldier begins to learn is discipline,—an immediate, unquestioning obedience to orders. A command is something to be obeyed, but in the hour of need it is more than that, for it becomes a rallying-point round which the mental faculties can steady themselves.

On the barrack-square or the drill-ground the new recruit probably found discipline irksome to the last degree, but it was steadily exercising its influence upon his character, so that in an hour which he wot not of he might be his own man—the undisputed master of himself.

There is an experiment with nickel steel well known to the physicist. If a bar of that metal, which in its natural condition is somewhat soft and pliable, be held firmly at both ends, and an attempt be made to break it by subjecting it to a pulling strain, the character of the metal changes. It ceases to be ductile or pliable, and becomes tempered to a high degree, so that, as Guillaume has said, it puts up an “heroic resistance to rupture.” It can be broken only by the application of immense tensile strain. There is an analo-



gous change taking place in a recruit under the stress of discipline. It hardens his body : but most of all it tempers his mind, and as courage is, first and last, a quality of the mind, the irksome minutiae of discipline are aids in the making of heroes.

Then, once he is in the Army, the recruit begins to breathe an atmosphere charged with stimulating traditions. The regiment of which he is an insignificant member—*his* regiment—has a cloud of glory trailing behind it through the ages. It fought with splendid bravery in the Peninsula ; it held its square unbroken at Waterloo ; it stormed the heights at Inkermann, and in all quarters of the globe, in frontier skirmish, or set battle, it has added lustre to its name. He feels proud to be identified with it even in a humble way. He begins to imbibe the spirit of its high history, and to partake of its collective courage. He has something to live up to : and it shall never be said that through the cowardice of No. 17889, Pte. John Smith, late grocer's assistant, the Nth Infantry Regiment fouled its records and fell from its lofty place. Better die than that.

The initial days of training are over, and the recruit is sent with a draft to the seat of war. He goes as a reinforcement to take the place of some one who has either been killed or who has been wounded or fallen sick, and is no longer able to remain with his regiment. As the white cliffs of old England fade from his view he casts a longing



look back at them, perhaps for the last time ; and then onward to danger, and mayhap death. Arrived in the war-zone, he usually has a week or two in which to accustom himself to his new surroundings, and then there comes a day when, for the first time, he goes up to the trenches. This is an experience I have discussed with many men. Their descriptions of their feelings varied. Some said that their chief sensation was one of curiosity tinged with a little anxiety. Others admitted frankly that they were thoroughly afraid, but recognized that what saved them was the collective courage of the men who accompanied them, which, by an influence recognized but not understood by psychologists, seized and helped them. In the midst of brave men it does not become one to be a coward ; and the steadying hand of discipline helped to support them.

If it was the fortune of a new recruit to find himself in a quiet sector, he rapidly became complete master of himself, and his next journey to the trenches was not such a trying experience as his first. But if he found himself thrown suddenly into an inferno of bursting shells, one of two things might happen. He either experienced a sudden lofty elation in which he became absolutely oblivious of personal danger and capable of performing feats of most astounding bravery, or he found himself "surprised of fear." This condition, I believe, most often arose from a purely physical disturbance of his internal secretions. Glands like the suprarenal, and possibly also the thyroid,



which are quite outside voluntary control, but which react to emotional states, pour their secretions into his blood. The purpose of these secretions is beneficent, but before they can establish themselves in this rôle there is a period when the perturbation of his emotions, reinforced by these toxic secretions, may make a coward of him. He turns deadly pale, he has violent palpitation, and his knees tend to give way under him. For the moment he is a physical wreck, and his nerve-cells, those wheels and levers in the power-house of his brain, are partially poisoned by the secretions brought to them by the blood. He is in a condition which may vary from fear to absolute terror. It is here that true courage displays itself; and here collective discipline tells. At its roots and in its essence courage is in effluence of the soul, and a man who, while his whole physical organization is tortured by fear, can yet so exercise his power of will as to make his poisoned and trembling limbs obey him, and "stick it," is a man of the highest courage. It is a little thing to face danger bravely if one is not afraid; but to be afraid, to be sick with fear, and to hold on and do one's duty is to touch the very heights of heroism. And if a man can do this he finds himself suddenly possessed of new and hitherto unexpected powers. The secretion from his suprarenals has braced up his blood-vessels, and strengthened the beat of his heart; but it has at the same time mobilized all the available sugar in his body, and, as sugar is one of the most useful



of all the "reserve-stuffs" of muscular energy, he discovers that he is endowed with new strength.

It is this physiological fact which enables us to understand how a soldier, who, by force of will, remained "his own man" during those perilous moments when his courage was at its lowest ebb, is brave and strong as a lion when in the thick of the fight.

At the critical moment a man's will may be reinforced by ideals. The Frenchman, who goes over the top shouting "Vive la France!" is supporting his will by appealing to his sense of patriotism. With us patriotism is not a cult which expresses itself readily in language; but an Englishman falls back on other ideals. Religious or irreligious, he is likely to have a fine sense of duty, and with his sense of duty is interwoven a regard for his personal honour. Behind these stand his respect for the traditions of his regiment, and the loyalty and obedience to commands which have been inculcated into him by army discipline, and, singly or collectively, these considerations act as buttresses to his will, and he compels his shaking body to obey the behests of his mind. Once the victory is achieved, and his will has asserted itself as master of the situation, the emotional factors cease to play a part so strong; his "poison glands" function naturally once more, and his physical condition returns to the normal.

There is no doubt that a definite parallelism exists between a man's physical state and the courage he exhibits. Bravery, unless a man be



a poltroon, is more naturally expected of a man in splendid physical condition than of a weakling; for the reaction and interaction between soul and body is an intimate one. A brother medical officer has told me of a sergeant who performed feats of superb heroism, with an utter disregard of personal danger, but who, when seriously wounded, and after the loss of much blood, became quite unnerved. One can readily understand this. Mind can only act upon the body through its organ, the brain. If the brain-cells were exhausted by physical strain, and blanched for lack of blood, they would, like the stiff keys of a decrepit piano, refuse to respond to the mind's touch. The man's true personality would, therefore, be unable to assert itself, and his lower centres would assume control.

There is a marked difference between foolhardy contempt of danger and prudent courage. There is no special heroism in exposing oneself to unnecessary risks. The man who combines courage with timely prudence is the better soldier.

Under the conditions of modern warfare, continuous steady and perspicacious hardihood or endurance is a greater asset, and a more accurate test of a man's courage than occasional sporadic and unexpected acts of heroism. But the discipline of mind which the former entails will frequently beget the latter.

The man endowed by nature with a stolid, bulldog courage is usually deficient in imagination. Bravery comes to him more easily than to one who



is "of imagination all compact"; but to be possessed of a vivid imagination which can represent as actual happenings the anticipations of the excited brain and to show consistent courage is to demonstrate once again that true bravery is the offspring of a man's soul.

I have already said that a man partakes of the spirit of collective courage incorporate in his company. But a company itself, even a whole army, may receive the inspiration of courage from its leader. A battalion which, under one commander, will fight with the ineptitude of sheep, will enter the combat like a pack of lions when led by another.

One of Napoleon's greatest military assets was his extraordinary power of infecting men with his own courage. A few magnetic words from the little Corsican on the eve of battle and his men would accomplish what seemed impossible. This great gift of personal and inspiring magnetism belongs to some of the generals of our own day: witness the thrilling orders of Gouraud to his troops.

Moral courage is a higher type than purely physical courage. A man may be rich in the latter, but almost entirely devoid of the former. But, on the other hand, no man or woman can have moral courage in any high degree without at the same time possessing considerable physical courage. History affords us many examples of the combination. Socrates, Christ, St. Paul, Epictetus, Joan of Arc, Luther, John Knox—



these were all possessed of high moral and physical courage, as the records of history bear witness. But it is sometimes forgotten that our soldiers, whose physical courage is beyond all praise, have over and over again shown themselves to be possessed of moral courage of a like quality. When a soldier was taken prisoner by the enemy, he was, as soon as possible, brought before a board of enemy officers whose duty it was by cajolery, by threats, by bullying, and the methods of terrorism to extract from him all the information they could as to the disposition of our forces, the number of casualties in his battalion, the morale of our men, and the thousand and one items they desired to know for the furtherance of their plans and for our ultimate defeat. For any soldier this must have been a very trying experience. Exhausted possibly by the loss of blood, depressed at finding himself in enemy hands, weary with physical exertion, and probably hungry as well, he was subjected to a merciless and bullying cross-examination. Such an experience made demands upon his physical courage, but it was his moral courage that was put to the severer test. And with what results? There may have been exceptions; but almost invariably he showed a moral courage as splendid in his physical bravery on the field.

Once there fell into British hands a general order to the German troops. It cautioned all Germans that, if they should be taken prisoners, they must be loyal to their Army and their



Fatherland, and give no information, when cross-examined, that might be of use to the enemy. And, by way of encouragement, it paid an unconscious tribute to the moral courage of the British soldier, from whom, it said, it was practically impossible to extract any information of the slightest value. The German High Command actually held up the soldiers of "the contemptible little army" for the admiration and imitation of the invincible "field greys"!

Courage, be it physical or moral, knows neither class nor sect. It is as broad and wide as the soul of man.

But I have wandered far afield from my bank-clerk and grocer's assistant, who, lying quietly in their hospital beds, had no halo on their brows, though they well deserved it. They were typical of all the other men in wards who endured unspeakable horrors, and never flinched. Let us pay to each a tribute of lofty respect. They were all brave men.

But, in recognizing their greatness, let us not forget the mothers who bore them. It is the women of Britain who have handed on to these sons the spirit to endure. There is no paradox here. Endurance is more an attribute of woman than of man. It is a comparatively easy thing to exhibit bravery in a sudden emergency; but to women is given that harder task of a day-long, year-long, often life-long fight with threatening adversity, and not infrequently with pain.

Probably the mothers of these men were unaware



that they were doing a great thing ; but to bear, to rear, watch over and tend a family and keep them respectable with only a narrow income to fall back upon,—to see the wolf at the door, and silently beat him back,—to carry on through years of self-denial and self-sacrifice with a contented smile on one's face, is high heroism. Physical strength and the physical courage which rises within him at a sudden call may come from a man's father ; but the power to endure most often comes from the mother.

Unconsciously the silent and resolute mothers of Britain made these men what they were. They drew courage from their mother's breast, and with it the power to stand firm and never flinch. And as warfare in these days calls for staunch and continued fortitude, rather than for sudden and isolated acts of bravery, the inheritance and example derived by the men from their mothers have made our soldiers the steadiest in the world.



#### IV

“ ANÆMIA : G.O.B.”

“ **A** NÆMIA G.O.B.”

The stentorian voice of the sergeant who, with the aid of a flash-lamp, was examining the field-cards of the men who lay on stretchers in long rows from side to side of the darkened hut assailed my ear with this hitherto unheard-of diagnosis. Pernicious anæmia I knew, secondary anæmia I had seen all too much of among our mutilated and blood-drained men ; but “ Anæmia G.O.B.” was a novelty. Fresh to the Field of France, I had as yet only a meagre acquaintance with the Army’s love for abbreviation and initial letters. I had only recently learned that R.T.O. stood for Railway Transport Officer, and M.L.O. for Military Landing Officer. I had still a whole alphabet to acquire.

The N.C.O. at my side, busy filling in the details, shouted out by the sergeant, on a clean index card, repeated the words with a sort of flourish as he turned to me, and said, “ Which ward, sir ? ” And, being curious as to this strange new form of bloodlessness, I said “ Ward 4 ”—which at that time was under my care. Two stretcher-bearers drew up on the other side of the table. The



N.C.O. handed the index card to one of them, and, as they disappeared into the shadows at the farther end of the hut, I heard one of them call "Private John Fraser, No. 2869"—and a somewhat feeble voice answered, "Sir." Our lighting was very poor—for an air-raid warning had been issued just after the convoy arrived, and we were making what progress we could with the help of a carefully shaded hurricane lamp, and the occasional use of a "flash." But I caught a passing glimpse of the patient as he was borne past my table, and in the faint light his face, against the contrasting drab colour of the army blanket which enveloped him, looked deadly pale. But there was a cigarette between his lips—a pardonable breach of discipline of which my official mind (which is, I trust, represented by a very small convolution in my brain) took no cognizance. Later on, when the last stretcher had taken its burden to the allotted ward, I made further acquaintance with Private John Fraser. Safely in bed, and revived by a stimulating cup of hot cocoa, he did not present a very alarming appearance. To my enquiry as to how he felt he responded with a "Fine sir," rolling the last consonant like a rough pebble against his palate. His accent, apart from his name, betrayed his nationality, and I anticipated the reply to my next remark, "You're Scotch," which was more an assertion than an enquiry. "Yes, sir; Glesca' born and bred."

I took his field-card from its square brown envelope to discover his history, and there on the



somewhat soiled inner page I read an account of his wounds. These had already been treated at the Casualty Clearing Station, and were now practically healed. But the last entry arrested me. It read : " 29 10 — . To-day gave 20 ozs. of blood for transfusion " ; and underneath, " Transfer to Base Hospital," with the illegible signature and rank of the surgeon who had treated him.

So " Anæmia G.O.B." stood for " Anæmia : Giver of Blood," and I knew that behind the unattractive features of the lad before me was the soul of a fine man.

I got the story from him next day. He had been in the Casualty Clearing Station for nearly three weeks, when a wounded man in the last stages of exhaustion from hæmorrhage had been brought in. To give him a chance of life the surgeon had decided that the operation of transfusion of blood was necessary, that his empty vessels and his flagging heart, exhausting itself through futile and ill-nourished contractions round the lessened volume of his blood, might be filled again with the life-giving fluid they lacked. So he had called for volunteers to supply this brother in sore straits, and no less than ten had at once held up a hand. " He chose me, because I was strong and herty, and my wounds were gey near weel." There was nothing of boasting or special pride in his words. He treated the whole affair as a very light matter,—something that there was no cause to make a fuss of ; but he was justly



pleased to be able to say that when he left the Casualty Clearing Station the man to whom he had given of his blood was doing well and "the major had great hopes of him."

Later in the day, when censoring letters, I came across his letter to his mother. Even the most modest of soldiers will sometimes let his pen carry him away, and on occasion, when writing to his friends, dilate *con amore* on deeds of bravery or narrow shaves which he has experienced. But most often they are reticent—with a fine, large-hearted reticence—about their doings. They wish to spare their friends anxiety. But this was a case in which one might have expected to hear a panegyric played, with the heroic pedal down. But not a bit of it.

He had written :

"DEAR MOTHER,

"Don't be anxious because you see I've changed my address, and am in another hospital. I'm getting on fine, and my wounds are very near well. But the other night I gave a wee drop o' my blood to a puir fellow that was near dead frae loss o' blood when they found him, and the doctor has sent me down to this hospital for a change of air."

That was all : the rest of the letter contained no "information that might be of use to the enemy," unless the German Staff could make capital out of the knowledge that Private John



Fraser “ would be none the waur o’ another pair o’ socks—the kind ye knit yersel, for the Army ones are awful trash.”

Private John Fraser was a much bigger man than the deed he had done. In army circles, and among surgeons, the giving of blood in this way is not regarded as calling for any special mention. There is little or no pain attending the operation, and to the donor of blood there is practically no danger. It means only a few weeks of lassitude and some loss of bodily vigour, until the recuperative powers of the body can readjust matters by the evolution of new blood-cells. And Nature is a wonderful artificer in repairs. But, though a little thing regarded from the surgical point of view, it is a great thing when looked at from another angle. For it speaks for a large and generous sympathy. And it shows that a community of suffering makes all men blood-brothers.

This obscure private has doubtless, if he lived, returned to his work of porter in the city warehouse from which he came. His name appeared on no roll of honour, and no civic welcome awaited him. But if, as the Padres tell us, there is another Roll in which the record of each man’s life is written full, I think that on that golden page where the first Name is that of Him who showed us the “ greater love ” there will be a little line for this simple British soldier.



## V

### THE CHESTNUT AVENUE

OUR hospital was pitched upon a roughly rectangular piece of ground. Some said that the site was originally a vineyard, and colour was lent to the tradition by the numerous channels, more or less choked by blown sand, which might have been used to convey water to the thirsty trees from the stream which chided and chattered between its concrete banks behind the officers' lines. But no grapes of Eshcol were visible when, in the depth of a bitter winter, we took possession of the ground. Then it was nothing but a stretch of hard, unlovely, and beaten earth where, we were told, the Gurkhas, the Punjabis and the stately Sikhs had at one time tabernacled in tents.

Along one side of the ground ran an avenue of stately chestnut-trees, which bordered each side of a road. Their broad and massed leaves, enveloping the far-flung branches, made a screen under which coolness and a gracious twilight might be found when the barbed rays of the sun, pouring relentlessly down, made life out of the shade intolerable. Here and there a ray of sunlight succeeded in piercing a path through the



green canopy, and dappled the surface of the roadway with a little pool of gold. Or at night a wandering moonbeam broke through and splashed the path with a cascade of white spray, which quivered like huge beads of trembling quicksilver, as the leaves stirred in the nocturnal breeze. But always the road between the chestnut-trees was a haunt of shade and cool delight, as many a sick and wounded man had discovered, to his heart's joy. To walk into the avenue was like passing into a cool room out of the un pitying glare.

With the first warm breath of spring the burgeoning buds unfolded and the grey branches which, all winter through, had been stretched out like the aching arms of a childless woman, were hidden beneath a wealth of tender green. Day after day bud opened after bud till the branches were lost sight of under their burden of foliage, of a verdure so delicate that every leaf might well have been a flower. It was a delight to lift one's eyes from the parched hospital paths and see beyond the glaring white of the canvas wards this bank of wholesome green, with elusive shadows of violet among the topmost boughs.

By early May the waxen flowers of the trees were in full bloom, and the sight was one of daily wonder. Against the soft green background, with its purple shadows, these conical masses of creamy blossom looked like fine candles waiting, like altar candles, to be lit by some reverent acolyte.

And every evening the miracle was wrought.



The westering sun sank to its daily rest. As the earth rolled up to meet it, the little patch of sea, seen all day long from my tent door like a sapphire set in the silver of the engirdling hills, lost its azure brilliance, and became as a sheet of glass.

The low-lying limestone crags beyond it, mellowed by the failing light, seemed clothed in a garment of delicate grey—the alluring grey of a dove's wing. As the sun sank lower its circumference became sharply defined until it looked like a glowing bowl over whose rim a flood of molten gold poured across the sky. Along the summit of the dove-grey cliffs ran a ragged streamer of soft pink, like a frothy scarf of rose-coloured silk caught by the vagrant wind. Above it the sky was a limpid expanse of opal and amethyst.

The nearer atmosphere and the light beneath the pine-trees in the little grove where my tent was pitched assumed a new quality. As one looked down the lines a gauzy film of heliotrope seemed to be interposed in the path of one's vision, and the common canvas of the tents was touched with a beauty that a painter might imagine, but could never hope to capture.

The sun sank lower, its molten gold changing to a ruddy glow. The dove-grey of the cliffs deepened gradually to a cobalt-blue; the delicate rose-colour in the sky above them became a golden red, and then the miracle happened. As though a lighted taper had been run from candle to candle on some high altar, setting each alight



with mystic fire, the red rays of the setting sun were caught by the waxen flower-candles on the chestnut-trees, and every tip gleamed with a point of flame. It was the sacramental tribute of Nature to a mystery.

Miles away, beyond the screen of the chestnut-trees, one could see on the high shoulder of a grey hill the tower of Notre-Dame, and on the pinnacle of the tower the great golden figures of the Mother and the Child. As the twilight gathered the sense of distance was lost, and the figures on the tower seemed to draw nearer until they became the apex of the leafy high altar on which a thousand candles were alight. Such a picture might well turn all thought into poetry and sublime emotion into worship. And then the sun went down ; and, as though by a magic breath out of the infinite distances of space, the lighted flower-candles were extinguished, and quickly the gathering darkness fell.

I know that all this bewitching display of colour and this symbolic miracle were nothing more than the expression of simple, natural laws. There was no change in the sun itself ; but its rays, striking at different angles the vapour-laden and dust-encumbered atmosphere that lies like an ocean all over the earth, were broken, dispersed, refracted and commingled until they gave to the enraptured eye this indescribable vision of beauty. Vapour and dust and the rays of the sun ! That was all ; but from such simple materials the Master Painter of the universe



makes His pictures, and with such natural agencies are miracles wrought.

Was it a mere chance, an idle accident, whereby, evening after evening, while the flowers were in full bloom, this glorious vision was spread before the gaze of all who had the eyes to see? Some would say it was; but I wonder. Here in the presence of broken and suffering men,—men who had come from the hell of battle, but would soon return to it again,—men who had lost all thought of the City Beautiful, and to whom God seemed nothing more than a relentless monster speaking their doom through an iron throat in the language of bursting shells, was unfolded this tender vision—of Nature paying tribute to Motherhood, the holiest thing on earth, and rendering homage to the divine purity of a little Child, who gave to humanity an unconquerable hope.



## VI

### THE WOMAN'S PART

**I**T will take a quarter of a century to cast the records of the war and of the nation's effort into proper form. And in those annals will be chronicled innumerable deeds of superb heroism ; but not all the brave doings will come to the light of day. Side by side with his thrilling chapters on martial achievements the careful historian will put on record some account of the splendid work done by our women, and will tell in glowing periods of their patriotic services in hospitals, munition factories, ship-yards and on the broad acres of our island home. The men of the Empire have won the war ; but without the devoted and heroic assistance of the women behind them their task would have been well-nigh impossible. So the fair-minded historian will give them an honoured place in the archives : and well they deserve it, for they have won it bravely.

But, unless he is an historian with larger human sympathies than the average bookworm of his breed, he will pass over in absolute silence a large body of women who are deserving of the highest praise the human tongue can bestow. They wore no uniforms ; their portraits did not appear in



the daily papers ; they were not encouraged to “ carry on ” by timely and genial visits from the King and Queen ; but, thank God, they did carry on, bravely, unobtrusively and unseen, with no thought of publicity or reward except the love of their children, and the long-hungered-for kiss on their tired eyes when their warrior-husband, with the laurels of victory in his mud-stained hand, came home from the war.

You ask who these unnoticed heroines were. They were the humble mothers of Britain ; women in little cottages in obscure corners of the land ; women in stifling houses in crowded city courts ; women often in prim little pretentious suburban villas. The vortex of war had sucked their husbands in—and they were left alone to guard the home, and tend the little nestlings in the nest. Would they have held their husbands back if they could ? Look into their hearts and see. They would : yes ! But they did not make his going any harder for him by selfish clamour and hysterical complaint. They kissed him and sent him forth with a brave, proud look in their eyes, but with a bleeding heart. Unflinching they made their great renunciation : and the measure of the grandeur of their sacrifice was the love they bore their man, and the price it cost them to let him go. Being a man, he was never likely altogether to understand. They measured their life by loss and not by gain :

“ Not by the wine drunk, but the wine poured forth ;  
For love’s strength standeth in love’s sacrifice,  
And whoso suffers most hath most to give.”



And then they returned to their humble task : a task lowly but divine.

If the sole care of young children were entrusted to men the statistics of culpable homicide the world over would present a startling increase. There are few things more trying to the patience than the constant care and nurture of little children. Blended of a curious compound of demon and angel, they make extraordinary demands on the temper, tact, and unselfishness of those to whom they are entrusted ; and that women can discharge this ministry so well is as much a sign of divine grace as of maternal aptitude. All up and down the land there are homes from which the father is absent, where the task of tending, feeding, clothing and protecting in a thousand little ways the children committed to her care devolves entirely upon the lonely mother. It requires more than a little bravery to discharge these duties with a smiling face day after day even in times of peace ; but to carry on in the same fashion with a hideous anxiety gnawing at one's heart, in days of weariness and through nights of weakness, without a murmur and with never an angry word, is to live a life of superb heroism.

And the women of Britain did it by the thousand. Before the war the family income may have required careful adjustment to make it fit the family needs. During the war that problem was a more urgent and perplexing one, and there was only the mother to deal with it. But she did it : for it would never do to meet her husband on



his return with a pile of debts. She denied herself that the children, whose appetites grew with their bodies, might have enough to eat. She sat up far into the night plying her industrious needle that the children might be decently clad. She rose with the dawn to set her house in order and to ensure that her children were washed and dressed, and properly fed before they hurried to school. Her day was all too short for the multitudinous duties that crowded into it, and yet she kept a smiling face. And sometimes, when the burdens of the moment seemed almost intolerable, she would take from a secret corner over her heart a soiled and crumpled piece of paper, and read with glowing pride the brave words pencilled there. Somewhere within sound of the guns a mud-soiled, weary man had found time to write and tell a little woman in England that he loved her, and her heart was strong again. So she took pen and paper and wrote to him cheerfully, telling him all the little titbits of domestic news: what baby said to his sister; how pretty Mary looked in her hat with the trimming of daisies, and how well John was doing at school. Into her missive she poured all the joy and happiness of her life; but never a word of her struggles and difficulties, her weariness and her heartache. She sent him brave messages of encouragement and of love. Her letter was a masterpiece of unselfish camouflage, and unless her husband was wise beyond common measure he would never guess all that lay unwritten between the lines.



She looked on him as a hero : she did not know that her heroism was as great as his own. And possibly the big world, which never thinks very deeply, did not know it either. It was not given to her to do deeds of knightly valour in the shell-torn field. But her task was equally hard, and much more monotonous : and there was no glamour of battle about it, but only the golden light of love. And in that light she continued her work of self-effacement and self-sacrifice, so that, when he came home again, her man found the fire still glowing on the hearth, and saw his children healthy and well-clad and clean. That was her bit, and right nobly she did it.

At length the weariest day comes to an end. The children were long since cuddled down and asleep. With tired feet and aching eyes, she sought her little room. It was lonely there : no icy, matter-of-fact historian will ever know how lonely. But it was peopled by memories. It was in this hallowed room that, years ago, she passed through a furnace of suffering, but in the morning rejoiced with a joy unspeakable as with trembling hand she pushed down the white coverlet to let her man see the gift she had given him in his first-born. But he was no longer there : he was . . . ? and she fell upon her knees by the little white bed. And he, far off, in a shell-swept trench, wondered why the hail of missiles passed him by unscathed.

Yes : the women of Britain have shown themselves worthy of their great heritage, and not the



least worthy are the mothers whose war-work was the care of the children and the home. We are apt to pass them by : to forget them ; to see no grandeur in their lowly duties, and their loyal devotion to their tasks. Their names appear in no Honours Lists, and they receive no decorations. No ! I am wrong. For some of them possess a decoration which is at once a glory and a pain. It is a little cross set among the scarlet poppies of France.



## VII

### KILLING NO MURDER

IT was night—moonless and dark, save only when a Véry light soared aloft, tearing the blackness with a blinding streak, then paused, at the zenith of its flight, to lean forward, puff, and fall, shedding a great beam of betraying whiteness over a patch of No Man's Land. It was night—chill and silent, save only for the far-off rumble of guns and the thunder of bursting shells. In a little sector of a trench which at the moment was free from the inquisitive attention of the distant gunners, there was a scene of noiseless, purposeful activity. Some twenty men were rapidly removing their badges from their tunics and caps, and slipping from their necks their identity discs, the little tablets of reddish-brown, and of greyish-green which every soldier wore, and called his "death discs." On each was stamped his name, rank, and regiment. They dropped them into a canvas bag held by the sergeant, and the officer in charge of the platoon looked carefully at each man to see that over the back of the collar of his tunic a little triangle of white handkerchief was showing, so that in the darkness they might know each other, and recognize friend



from foe. Every man's face and hands were blackened.

A raid on the opposite trench was about to take place, and there was an air of hushed, eager, nerve-racking expectancy. The bombers filled their pockets with Mills's grenades, a couple of men passed a caressing hand over their bayonets, the sergeant slipped the strap of his iron-headed club over his wrist, and the subaltern looked again to make sure that all the chambers of his revolver were charged. A last look of inspection, a last word or two of instruction and cheer spoken in a low, steady voice, out of a young and wildly beating heart, and then, with a "Come on, boys," the officer slipped with the stealth of a Red Indian over the parapet. Rapidly the men followed with never a sound. Ten yards in front of them stood the intricate maze of our own wire, and in single file, the officer leading, they entered the zig-zag path that lead through it, and, with what speed they might, made for the open ground beyond it. When the officer got through he halted and waited until the last of the men was beside him—then they spread out laterally, and, still in absolute silence, sometimes erect, but sometimes crouched down, or even on hands and knees, pushed on towards the German wire. This is work which requires that high form of courage which Napoleon called "two o'clock in the morning courage."

A Véry rocket hissed up from the opposing trench, and at once every man in the raiding party turned to immobile stone. At such a



revealing moment the slightest movement might mean death. When the blinding glare of the rocket had expired, leaving a sense of pulsing brightness on the startled eyes, the raiders dropped silently and flat upon their faces and lay still. If the first rocket has given the watchers in the German trench any hint of their presence another would be sent up to secure confirmation, and the dark pause before it went just gave them time to render themselves as invisible as possible by throwing themselves flat on the ground. There they rested till they imagined the German had satisfied himself that he was mistaken, and then on again, crouching on hands and knees till the enemy wire was reached. Behind this they lay at short distances from each other, while the wire-cutters were at work, snipping with muffled shears the last barrier between them and the foe. Soon a path was cut through, and they threaded their way along it. At the other side the sand-bagged parapet of the German trench was visible as a dark shadow.

Now was the moment for breathless, hushed silence. They lay just beyond the wire. They heard the sentry in the trench stamping his feet on the floor board. Was it a signal—or was it to keep himself warm? Then they heard him begin to march along his sector of trench. They listened with taut ears. The sound told in which direction he was moving. He evidently suspected nothing. Two figures detached themselves from the little cluster of raiders, and wormed themselves noise-



lessly to the parapet. The tramp, tramp of the sentry came nearer, and halted. They heard the stamp of his feet again. He was peering through a loop-hole between the sand-bags, but he saw nothing. Two yards to the right and he would have looked straight into the faces of the officer and sergeant. Reassured, he resumed his march, passed the point where these two raiders were lying, and went on to the end of his beat.

As the sound of his footsteps died along the trench the subaltern and the sergeant raised their heads slowly and silently and peered into and along the trench. No Sioux or Blackfoot Indian straight from the pages of Fenimore Cooper ever did it more skilfully. Silently they dropped down again, as the sentry turned and came along the trench. The sergeant grasped his club. The sound of the sentry's footfall came nearer; he passed right behind the sand-bag which screened the sergeant. A shadow bodied itself in the darkness, a club swung; there was a thud as though a bladder of lard had dropped on a tiled kitchen floor; no cry or groan, and another thud as the body dropped down to the bottom of the trench.

With the first thud the officer was over the parapet, and, like hounds out of leash, his men were over with him. In little alcoves in the trench a sleeping figure or two was found. These were rudely awakened. If they resisted a bayonet thrust or a blow on the head with the club silenced them for ever. Two threw up their hands and were made prisoners. Soldiers with bombs in their



hands stood round the two entrances to the dug-outs. There was the sound of alarm in one of them. The officer, flashing his light into the doorway, called for the occupants to surrender. The only answer that came was the report of a revolver, and one of the bombers dropped, wounded in the head. That was enough. Into the black depths half a dozen grenades were thrown, and they burst in the bowels of the earth with a dull roar like the boom of the sea in the throat of some vast sea-cave—and all was silence. With a rush—for they were brave men—the Germans in the second dug-out stormed up through its entrance. They were met with a hail of bombs, but some of them found their way into the trench, and they would not surrender. A bayonet, driven deep into his chest, so that his heart's blood spouted in a great jet on to the muzzle of the gun, laid one low; the officer's revolver blew the brains out of another; and the sergeant's club fell with terrific and death-dealing sureness on another bullet-like skull. The bombers, too, were busy, and soon the trench was a shambles; but the resistance slackened: the Germans in it were all killed or prisoners, and with a short whistle the officer warned his men to clear for home.

Before leaving the trench, he dropped on his knee with the sergeant beside his man who had been shot with the revolver. His heart was still. He would fight no more. Both of them made a mental note of his name; and then they slipped over the top and followed the men and the prison-



ers. And not a moment too soon. The Germans in adjacent sectors were alarmed by the commotion. The sky was lurid with Véry lights; from two sides No Man's Land was being enfiladed with machine-gun fire. It was a perilous tract of country to cover; but they pushed on, and by and by came to the safety of their own trench. There a great welcome awaited them. Their casualties were rapidly estimated: one man lay dead in the German trench; one more was missing—he was last seen in No Man's Land on the return journey (later on a search-party would go out and look for him); two more were wounded, but have succeeded in crawling back. Altogether a very successful raid! Casualties slight, several prisoners taken, and a gory shambles of blood and death left behind in the German trench.

I have depicted what was a nightly incident on the Western Front. The soldiers who took part in this hazardous enterprise were men who in private life had never stained their hands with blood. Some of them, indeed, before the war could not have wrung the neck of a fluttering chicken without a sickening qualm. Now the hands of every one of them were imbrued with human blood, and if you looked into the shelter of the dug-out where they gathered drinking hot cocoa and smoking cigarettes, you would find them in no wise upset by the sanguinary experiences through which they had passed. There was regret, genuine and manly, for the loss of the pal they had left behind in the German trench; a little



anxiety, tinged with considerable hope, as to the fate of the man who was missing, and much friendly chaff of the two wounded men, who had not been lucky enough to get a "Blighty one."

But there was no evidence of any awe-stricken remorse of conscience for having taken the lives of other men. One would not expect that there should be, for the events were very recent, and remorse of conscience is a slowly developing form of torture: that is what helps to make it so deadly. But it becomes a matter of great interest to consider what has been the experience of these men in after-days.

When they found themselves back in rest-billets, or in hospital—which often does for a man's soul what his "Retreat" does for a devout priest—or, at a later date still, when the war was over and they returned to civilian life, and became once again highly respected citizens immersed in the avocations of peace, would they ever be tortured by the fact that they had robbed a fellow-creature of his life? Would their rest be haunted by the spectre of a blue-grey figure, with one hand laid upon his wounds, and the other outstretched with accusing and minatory finger? Or, like Lady Macbeth, would they walk in their sleep, reiterating the vain words: "Out, damned spot: out, I say!"?

If such had been their lot the increase of insanity in the country would have assumed staggering dimensions.

I think we may say firmly and at once that no



such dire calamity befell the men who, at such risks to themselves, took part in such a raid, or in any fighting at close quarters where each individual combatant knows whether or not he has killed a fellow-man. The circumstances are somewhat different, and the question is not so likely to arise, where the fighting is at long range, when a soldier cannot exactly be sure whether it is his bullet which has caused the advancing German to throw up his hands and fall forward dead.

I have asked many brother officers whether in four years' experience—the intimate experience that subsists between doctors and patients—they have ever come across the case of a soldier who was perturbed in the slightest degree by the thought that he had killed a man. The reply was a universal and unequivocal negative. Even in cases where the reason has become unseated in consequence of what the soldier has gone through, there has never been any evidence of the torture of remorse as a causal factor in producing the mental disability. That has been the experience of those medical officers with whom I have discussed the matter. It coincides with my own. I have also sought for information on this point from the Padres. They are, perhaps, more likely to know how the men feel about a matter of this kind than the medical officers. All of them assure me that no man has ever spoken to them as though he had a sense of guilty bloodshed on his conscience. I have also submitted the matter to a mental specialist who has had under his care a



very large number of men who, under the stress of warfare, have become temporarily insane. He assures me that not once in his large experience has he encountered any man whose mental unsoundness could be attributed to remorse because he had killed men. He has come across many soldiers whose insanity would appear to be due to an obsession that they had failed in their duty, and consequently disgraced themselves and their regiment; but never has he found a man among his many patients tortured by the delusion that he was a murderer.

It is well that it should be so, for there are times and occasions when killing is not murder. On this we are all agreed: it is fortunate that there should be such a consensus of opinion among the men to whom has fallen the actual duty of killing.

The objection to taking human life is founded upon the moral law which, as "summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments," teaches us that "Thou shalt not kill." For the purpose of this essay the Prayer-Book version, "Thou shalt do no murder," seems more fitting. To kill is not necessarily to murder. We need not look for a more striking illustration of this fact than is to be found in the history of Moses. He came down from the fire-capped mountain of Sinai with the Commandments graven on tables of stone. He found that in his absence the children of Israel had turned towards false ideals and were worshipping a golden calf. Such deviation from the path of revelation and right demanded swift



and stern punishment, and, though he had not forgotten the words graven upon the tables of stone which in his wrath he had hurled from him and broken, Moses, the law-giver, with that assurance that he was voicing the will of God which was so clear a characteristic of him, proclaimed : “ Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, put every man his sword by his side and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour.” There was no mealy-mouthed, weak-kneed compromise with evil on the part of the preceptor of Israel. Inspired with what he believed to be a special knowledge and revelation of the divine mind, he recognized that some evils can only be remedied by the wholesale slaughter of those who practise them, and though he could proclaim as a great divine edict the commandment, “ Thou shalt not kill,” he could at the same time with a sure vision see that expediency and justice must occasionally demand the abrogation and suspension of this law.

But, it may be said, the Mosaic dispensation was superseded by the revelation of God in Christ, and, though the Ten Commandments are still regarded as binding on all who keep the moral law, their interpretation has received a new quality from the further revelation. Let us face the question honestly. It might be imagined that the teaching of Christ was opposed to the taking of human life under any pretext, or under any conditions ; and isolated texts may be torn from



His teachings to support this view. But I cannot recall any occasion on which Christ objected to the profession of a soldier. More than once He paid due deference to military power, recognizing the while that it operated in another realm than the spiritual. He knew how society was constituted ; He saw that the soldiery were a necessary factor in the scheme of things, and He never challenged their right to exercise their calling. If He had regarded the vocation of arms as wholly wrong His anger against the legionaries of Cæsar would have blazed at white heat, as on that occasion, memorable and immortal, when He turned the hucksters out of the temple with a scourge of cords ; and His ringing denunciations of martial might would have echoed down the centuries. But the Christ did none of these things ; so that soldiering, with all that it entails, and it necessarily means the slaughter of human beings, is not categorically forbidden under the Christian dispensation.

This order of things teaches us to love our enemies, but we are not told to forgive them until they repent, and with some people repentance comes only through blood, suffering, and tears.

But there is a large class of men which will not acknowledge any allegiance either to the Mosaic code or to the laws of the Christian faith. Their ideals are purely social ; they profess fealty to no religious system. Frequently they are men of excellent character and high moral worth ; men who have a lofty regard for the rights of the indi-



vidual, and who might reasonably be expected to argue against the killing of their fellow-men. How can the slaughter inseparable from warfare be justified in their sight ?

Here we are brought face to face with root principles.

If we look at life with unclouded vision we must recognize that the whole social system rests upon a conventional compromise between primitive instincts and the moral law ; or, to put it at its lowest, social expediency. The first and chief of man's primitive instincts is that for self-preservation : and the instinct which causes him to seek for food, as well as the sex instinct—both of which are primitive and powerful factors in his life—are ancillary outgrowths from this fundamental instinct.

Allowed unhindered play, primitive instincts would rapidly reduce society to a condition of chaos. The evolution of man's conception of the moral law, and the restrictions that social conventions place upon the operations of primitive instincts, make life possible for the greatest number. But, behind all, the primitive instinct slumbers, and in the hour of need, as in time of war, when the dominant idea in man's mind is the preservation of himself, his family, and his possessions against the attack of his enemies, the old dormant fire leaps into a full blaze. The restrictions of convention are burned up in the flames, and the naked fact stands revealed. It is my life or his ; his life or mine.



It should not be forgotten that, in murder, as distinguished from killing in war, there is always an element of personal hatred. On our side, at least, there would seem to be no actual personal hatred between the individual soldier and his German opponent. I have seen men of both nationalities, who had been wounded in the same battle, and brought down to us in the same hospital train, sitting at opposite sides of the same reception hut, without the slightest sign of personal animosity. Indeed, so little evidence of hatred was there that our men were ready, with their fine sense of chivalry, to share their cigarettes with their recent enemies. Having bled on the same field, there was a kind of blood-brotherhood between them.

When he goes into a fight a soldier recognizes subconsciously, though he may not be able to express the feeling in articulate speech, that he is the champion of a principle. He is out to win; and to win he must kill men, not because they are men, but because they stand for something to which his country is opposed,—something which, if it had unchecked play, would subvert and overturn principles which either he has been brought up to regard as sacred, or which at the moment seem to be of paramount importance. He goes forth as an individual, but he is armed with the collective opinion of his fellow-countrymen behind him, who hold that the collective opinion represented by the soldiers against whom he has to fight is criminally wrong. He is, in some sense,



the executor of justice—justice at least as his fellow-countrymen see it for the moment—and not the calculating slayer of his fellow-men. The responsibility for his immediate acts is not his own, though, in the last analysis, among men who think, an act of private judgment is necessarily involved. But the final responsibility for his deeds is a collective one: it comes back to you and me. The soldier in the trenches is the instrument we make use of to secure our aims, and in the Great Assize it is not the man with the bayonet who will be arraigned as the chief defendant, but those who have put the weapon in his hands.

Every war must be judged in the light of history. But in this conflict there can be no doubt that we were one of the nations to which fell the herculean task of cleansing the world from the pestilence of a foul and immoral ideal, which had to be destroyed utterly if equity, justice, and right were to continue to exist upon the earth. In the struggle we did not require to man-handle our conscience into accepting as right what was only expedient. Our hands were clean. We were up against evil; we had to destroy it—and we could kill and not be murderers.



## VIII

### FLOWERS

**T**HERE are no flowers like English flowers. No garish, vivid, foreign flower has half the charm of a simply yellow primrose on a mossy bank, or a rich-hearted perfumed English rose. In France the flowers bloom early, with a pungency of colour that sometimes almost stings the eyes. They flaunt themselves thus vividly, because for the most part they are devoid of scent. They have no snare of perfume with which to enmesh the wandering amber-banded bee, the unconscious pilferer and distributor of the precious pollen. That, I imagine, is why they display such triumphant colours. Robbed of one attraction, they are compensated by nature with a special richness of livery ; but, until one grows used to it, the eye accustomed to the soft and alluring tints of our homely flowers is almost startled by its gaudiness.

Nowhere in France have I seen such visions of pure delight as are to be found in the thick hedges—*with their clambering roses*—that bound the sunken lanes of Devonshire. And although in the north the scarlet poppies cluster like a red splash of colour amidst the green corn, there is



something sinister about their hue. It makes one think of sorely wounded men who have bled that these gently undulating pastures may be kept free from the defiling footsteps of the enemy.

Outside the door of our operating-theatre the earth was beaten hard by the traffic of many feet. It offered a most inhospitable nidus for vegetation of any kind. But right upon it, from the late spring until mid-autumn, an adventurous flower that somehow had found root and nourishment in that unkindly soil spread the full pageantry of its beauty before the feet of men. I am no botanist, and cannot give the flower a name, but its blooms were bell-shaped, and of a mixed purple and white. They spread over the sand in a great rich cluster some two yards square, and the stretcher-bearers as they passed to and fro with their burdens were careful to avoid crushing the flowers under-foot.

Sometimes a stretcher would tarry for a moment within sight of that cluster of bloom, and two tired eyes would rest upon it for a moment. So that for many a sore-stricken soldier his last vision of earth before he swung through the ether-drenched atmosphere into a merciful and temporary oblivion was a vision of flowers : of purple, which is the colour of kings, and of white, which is the emblem of the pure in heart.

But not alone to the eyes do flowers speak. They can whisper a message to the heart, and I do not doubt that they often delivered their comfortable words to a soul burdened with the dread



of the unknown. I have sometimes wondered what thoughts linger to the last in the mind of a man when he surrenders his consciousness at the will of another and drifts, apparently a lifeless thing, along the edge of the gulf that separates us from eternal sleep. Perhaps the flowers knew. Perhaps that is why they grew there.

The blind would call it chance ; but what we call chance is simply our pitiful human way of explaining some of the mysteries that are too deep for us. There were a thousand other places where the seeds from which those flowers originated might have found a lodgment. They were not planted by a human hand : they came on the wings of the wind ; and the wind comes out of the uttermost spaces of the universe where there are things we wot little of.

There were a dozen other places in our camp where the theatre might have been pitched, and I am sure that the builders of it had no knowledge of the rich surprise that lay hidden in the dust of the roadway. The Engineers are not a body of sentimentalists ; to them the potential flowers in the camber of the roadway were no consideration : so they builded more wisely than they knew.

And the sun quickened the sleeping seeds with the breath of a new life, and they burst into that harmony of hue—green and purple and white—like a brave banner to cheer some traveller on his *via dolorosa* which often proves to be the way to life.



The mind that is essentially practical misses much that is beautiful. It can grapple with what it is pleased to call reality ; it has no time for anything else but brute facts. A man with such a type of mind would doubtless have wondered, if he had seen the stretcher-bearers step aside to spare that cluster of flowers ; and, being practical, would possibly have calculated in calories or ergs the amount of energy wasted in making the necessary deviation to avoid it. He could never have understood the message of these flowers as the wounded did.

But the wounded knew, and once I saw a soldier hobble on crutches along the uneven path and drop on his only knee beside the flowers. Next day he was going home. He plucked one of the bell-like blossoms and gently laid it between the pages of his note-book. This was his tribute to the gallant little plant that had fought through such hard circumstances to come to blossom there. But it was more than that. It was a silent acknowledgment of the light and hope that had flowed into his soul from that little flower when the clouds and darkness were overshadowing him, and he was facing the unknown.



## IX

### TUNING UP

NOT far from our hospital was a grove of pine-trees. They were not planted too closely together, and while, overhead, their branches touched and their foliage interlaced to afford a grateful protection from the rays of the sun, their trunks were sufficiently far apart to permit of free movement between them. Here any morning, from eight o'clock until ten, the casual passer-by might see something which would arrest and interest him. On the sandy soil, strewn with pine-needles, great games were afoot; and, from the laughter and general gaiety, he might imagine that he had stumbled upon some school picnic. But the picnickers were all young men, and, if he looked carefully at their tunic-less figures, he would see that they were wearing the dark grey army shirt, while their khaki-coloured breeches merged into regulation puttees. They were convalescent soldiers at play.

Here, in a ring of admiring spectators, each of whom was ready with a word of expert counsel or encouragement, two men were having a friendly bout with the gloves. The combat and its setting were such as would have rejoiced the heart of



Borrow. After half a dozen rounds, at a word from the N.C.O. the combatants would tear the gloves off, and two others from the ring of spectators would take their places. And then another ding-dong bout—ardent, but good-tempered, with no knock-out blows or kidney punches—would ensue.

A few yards away twenty soldiers were sitting in a ring playing a game that looked uncommonly like "hunt the slipper." They were all laughing like school-children, and jeering good-naturedly at the soldier who was fruitlessly pursuing the elusive object. Farther away two men were playing at battledore and shuttle-cock: and beside them a dozen men were engaged in a strenuous tug-of-war. Their opponent was a sturdy pine-tree, round whose ample trunk the rope was firmly tied. They would have to pull long and lustily before they tugged that opponent over the line. But this was not the object of their play. They were learning to "take up the slack" and to "get their weight on the rope," and to "heave" at the word of command. If it ever came to a contest with another team they would give a fine account of themselves, for the massive muscles on their backs might be seen rippling under their shirts and the sinews at their wrists stood out like iron cords. But the tree stood stolidly and unmoved.

Not far off a score of men, divided into teams of ten, were standing with legs wide apart, and heads bent down, so that each was touching the other. At a word from the sergeant the leader



of each team rapidly passed a tennis-ball through his legs to the man behind him. When it reached the last man he seized it, and ran at full speed to take his place at the head of his column, and without a moment's hesitation sent the ball on its journey once more. When it reached the last man once more, he seized it and rushed to the front: and so on—the object being to change one's line completely till the first man had become the last in the column, and the last man was at its head, before the opposing team could effect this change. There was laughter and good cheer on every face, and sundry outbursts of caustic wit when some unfortunate soldier dropped the ball and spoiled the chance of his team. All up and down the grove were little groups of men at play, and in one corner, to the whistled music they were producing with their own lips a score of men were practising the “two step.” In the middle of the ring stood a sergeant. He made the dancers pause, while, with mincing tread, he showed them how “the lady” ought to step. There was great laughter at his imitation—and the whistling once more commenced and the dance went on.

And, as games with a ball are, with the exception of the sport of the chase, among the oldest forms of human amusement in the world, we found them well represented here. The old-fashioned game of rounders, as played on many a village green, here found its devotees; while other men were practising volleying shots with a football at a goal defended by an agile and enthusiastic



keeper. They rarely broke through his defence, and if they did the deliverer of the successful shot took his place for a time between the posts.

In a quieter corner of the grove a little group of men, who did not look so robust as the others, were playing a less strenuous game. It was such a game as Nausicaa might have played with her maidens on that eventful morning when the unexpected advent of Ulysses interrupted their sport ; but the ball they were throwing and catching was no airy bauble of sheepskin and feathers, but a hard regulation cricket-ball. The dexterity they were acquiring in catching it might win them fame on the springy turf of some English field when the war was at an end.

If the spirit of Marlborough or Wellington had taken a morning stroll through this grove I imagine it would have been paralysed with astonishment. Was this how the successors of the men who fought at Malplaquet, Minden, and Waterloo disported themselves ? May Nero fiddle while Rome burns ? Whatever had gone wrong with the Army ? A plague upon this light-hearted jollity ! Surely, to the tuck of drum, each of these giddy revellers should receive " three dozen well laid on," and the shade of the old warrior retired to its appointed place with wrath in its heart.

But all is not as it seems. These light-hearted soldiers playing at children's games were not wasting their time. They were getting fit to return once more to fight the foe.

The War Office is not usually credited with any



gifts of imagination ; but some one in high authority had at least one inspired moment, and we were contemplating its results.

When a man has been in hospital for any length of time, whether because of wounds or sickness, he gets out of condition. His muscles lose tone and become soft and flabby ; his spirits tend to become depressed and he grows introspective. To send a man up to the line immediately on discharge from hospital would have been to court disaster ; so, if he had not been fortunate enough to be sent to England, he was discharged, when cured, to a Convalescent Depot. Here he was gradually made fit again. In the old days the process of hardening was barrack square drill alternated with route marches.

But some genius had evolved a better way ; and we were watching it in practice.

Men were made fit again by playing games. Their early training had taught them all the drill they required. To repeat it, day after day, would doubtless harden them ; but the irksomeness of it, and its lack of stimulative interest would bore them, and fail to re-establish that mental tone which is a prime necessity if the men are to endure the tremendous strain that modern war entails. So, instead, they played games : not in a casual, happy-go-lucky way ; but keenly and intently, and always under the watchful and directing eyes of a non-commissioned officer.

When one game began to pall they started upon another ; and one could safely judge, from the



laughter, the boisterous good spirits and the cheeriness of their faces that they were all thoroughly enjoying themselves. Unconsciously they were making themselves fit : and day by day they discovered that they could play longer and better without breathlessness or exhaustion. In three weeks or a month they were overhauled by the medical officer. He had been keeping a watchful eye on their progress, though they may have known nothing of it. Those who had recovered their old strength and tone were marked for discharge to duty. And if, of an evening, one chanced to be in the pine-grove one might see a draft of twenty or more men, with their full kits strapped on their shoulders, stepping briskly along the dusty road. They were whistling blithely as they went, and keeping step to the music. Some of them cast a friendly look back at the old pine-grove where they had played so many happy games. It would be something to tell their children of some day in the future. Meantime, they were hurrying back to take part once more in a big game where the stakes were human lives. They were marching bravely back to the war.



## X

### FOUR DAYS

#### THE FIRST DAY

AUGUST 1st, 1914, fell on a Saturday, and after the lapse of sixteen chequered years every event of that day remains clear in my memory as though it had been etched there by acids.

There are more routes by which a Scotsman may return from England to his native country than along the iron roads of the Midland or London & North-Western Railways, and, on holiday bent, I was making for the south-west coast of Scotland *via* the north of Ireland. This is a zigzag course that, in times of peace, has attractions for any one who loves the sea.

Shortly after noon we were rounding Corsewall Point, where the baffled Atlantic whinnies as it stamps with white-fetlocked hoofs on the black restraining rocks. A few moments, and we were heading up Loch Ryan for Stranraer. Our destination was Ballantrae—not the Ballantrae of Stevenson's romance—but that other village with a similar name full for me of golden memories of childhood which no romance can equal.

There were three of us : the Lady, the Torpedo,



and myself. Arrived at Stranraer we disembarked and, as I walked down the gangway from the packet-boat, I little thought that when next I set foot upon her decks she would be bearing me to the scene of war.

We refreshed ourselves with a meal at one of the excellent inns of the place, and about the middle of the afternoon set out on the last stage of our journey. For the Lady and our impedimenta we hired a conveyance, driven by one of those excellent old cicerones who know the history of every stone in the countryside, and the pedigree of every dog. The Torpedo and I were on bicycles, and by easy pedalling we kept ahead of the black mare and the vehicle.

The tide was on the ebb, and Loch Ryan, with its memories of the "Rover" celebrated by Hew Ainslie, lay calm as a mill-pond in the hush of the summer afternoon.

As we sped along the flat, easy road, with the white beacon six miles away looming larger at every turn of the pedals, there were many things to interest us. The Torpedo was keenly inquisitive as to every memory that the old familiar sights wakened within me. There were no high adventures to chronicle; but it is passing strange how simple experiences, seen down the vista of a quarter of a century, assume a new quality, and become of entrancing interest to one's children.

The six miles to the village of Cairn Ryan were soon covered, and for old times' sake we dismounted at the Cross Keys Inn. Thirty years



before the lemonade sold there was the finest in the world ; so, at least, thought a thirsty boy who year by year broke his journey there to test the vintage. Would the cellar still live up to its reputation ? We should see. The little bar-parlour was unchanged : the same coloured prints, or so it seemed to me, hung upon the walls ; the imprimatur of their vintage on the lemonade-bottles was the same ; but—alas, alas !—for me at least the old-time bouquet was no more.

The Lady says my palate is vitiated by tobacco. I imagine that my gustatory sense must be declining with old age, for the keener appreciation of the Torpedo voted the beverage unequivocally “top-hole,” and, with a loyalty to his father’s country which, at the moment, I did not feel like endorsing, said : “I never tasted lemonade like this in England.” The enthusiastic encomiums of holiday-making boyhood are rarely what the lawyers would call “considered opinions.”

Then we remounted our willing steeds which meantime were resting on the cobble-stones without, leaning each a patient shoulder on the sunlit, white-washed wall, and cycled on through the straggling village and past the tall lighthouse. To our right was a high wall closing in some far-stretching demesne, in the parks of which we caught glimpses of antlered deer and timid fawns. Ere long the road began to rise ; and we left the sea below us, blue and beautiful, and pedalled steadily on past copses of hazel-bushes and under great festoons of red rowan berries. Already the



birds were busy in their rich foraging grounds—forgetful that winter was yet to come.

As the long Scotch miles, each marked by a grey stone set in an alcove by the roadside, slipped away behind us we came in sight of the headland of Finnart, where the high lands run down sharply to the sea. Here our path left the coast and ran like a brown ribbon, flanked on one side by flat meadows, beyond which rose a wall of tree-clad hills, and on the other by undulating pastures. Just past that milestone, more than thirty years ago, I killed my first adder. What an adventure! As great as the Pilgrim's fight with Apollyon or St. George's with the dragon!

With all proper circumstance of graphic detail I was recounting this wonderful feat to the Torpedo, when he pricked the bubble of my dreams by asking, "You are sure it was an adder, and not a harmless blindworm?" Confound this modern education, and the scientific infant's food of the *Children's Encyclopædia*! It robs the world of all romance. For thirty years and more I have cherished the proud belief that it was a poisonous reptile, which breathed fire and smoke and deadly venom. Now I can only say I do not know.

And so we sped on till, just beyond a little church set back from the road on a tiny eminence, the way turns suddenly, rises with a jerk over the arch of a bridge beneath which runs a bronzed burn, with a promise of a trout in its every dimple, and we came to the long hill of Glenapp. There may be more beautiful glens than this in other



parts of Scotland, or in Wild Wales, but if there are I have yet to find them. For at least a mile the road winds uphill, overarched all the way by the branches of pine-trees through which the sunlight trickles in golden rays. Their beautiful green is thrown into relief by the purple shadows between the boughs. To the left, as we ascend, the hill out of whose side the road has been cut slopes steeply up till its dimly seen tree-clad summit almost touches the sky. On the other side, beyond the turfen parapet, the hillside slips away, still tree-covered, down to the brown burn that chuckles in the valley as it hurries on to the bridge at the foot of the glen. This glen is a veritable "haunt of ancient peace." Here one may forget all the turmoil and clamour of that busy, anxious world we have left behind us. There is nothing to break the stillness but the far-off, scarcely heard music of the burn, the chirrup of an occasional bird, and the gentle whisper of the moving branches. But life looks at one with a thousand eyes. Shy rabbits pop into the sanctuary of the brackens; with chattering protest a blackbird darts before us from tree to tree; or a weasel may lift its sharp little face to see who is coming up the road, and then dart to the shelter of the heap of stones on the hillside. The banks along the road are garish with colour. There is the proud upstanding foxglove, with its beautifully modelled flowers, the great green fronds of bracken; the pointed hart's-tongue fern; the yellow buttercup and tufts of royal heather.



Here and there a great brown gash in the hillside, from which some storm of winter has torn a tree, or a moss-grown boulder of rock, lend variety to the picture.

But the longest hill and the sweetest glen come some time to an end, and soon we are pushing along the high road with moorland on both sides, and over to the left a glimpse of the sea and the brave figure of Ailsa Craig. Nearer at hand, set on the wine-dark moorland, is a grey stone cairn. It marks the place where the dutiful postman, caught by a blizzard on his lonely round, was smothered by the drifting snow. Death touched him, and he slept.

Only a few more miles now separate us from our destination,—miles made pleasant by the evenness of the road, the pleasant copses, and the wholesome smell of peat. Soon we are at the summit of the long hill which runs down to Ballantrae, and from this point of vantage we can see, beyond the amber and silver thread of Stinchar, the pretty village with its right-angled street, the church with its spire, the ruins of the old castle screened by the trees beyond the bridge, and, beyond the village, the sea.

Welcoming faces await us at the end of the journey, and when the dust of travel has been washed off with copious and delightful water, and the expenditure of muscle-stuff made good at the groaning board, we walk out into the evening air. The old leaf-covered church, with its quiet God's acre where rests the temporal dust of some of



those whose blood still runs, after two generations, in my veins, calls me, and I enter the churchyard. Here all is peace. From the foot of the well-kept grave I turn my eyes to where, half-hidden by a green shoulder of rising ground, the old white house smiles with a kindly welcome. What a haven, what a heaven of infinite delight that old house was for grandchildren and nieces and nephews! And they who made it so now rest quietly here in sure and certain hope.

Over the shingle, ploughing its devious course, Stinchar still races as of old; and, on the black rocks at Downan Point, the waves are dashing and flinging up spray like a cloud of chaff under the beat of the flail. Aye, all is peace here; but there is a sense of mystery and foreboding in the air. All day long I have tried to forget that on the horizon there is a little cloud no bigger than a man's hand; and, with Nature pouring her immemorial balm upon the spirit, in the midst of old loved scenes, it has not been hard to shut out the unwelcome thought. But here, this summer evening, there is a hush and a strained expectancy. The skeleton hand of a vague, impalpable dread is fingering our heart-strings. In the village street the vendor of evening papers, which have just arrived from the distant outer world, is stormed by an anxious and unusual mob. The sheets are eagerly torn open, and their contents read by little groups of threes and fours which straggle and halt, and move and halt again in the middle of the inviting road. But there is no authentic news:



nothing but rumour and the dust of rumour. The Chancelleries of Europe are humming, and clouds big with omen are gathering at every point of the compass. Is it too late to avert the horror? Must there be war, and, if there is, shall we be dragged into it?—and, if we are, what then? There is no exultant excitement, but a heart-gripping uncertainty, and a hope, expressed a hundred times, that the danger may yet be averted, and that better counsels may prevail. And the sun goes down in the west, and the sea beneath his dying beams is like a lake of gold. And then comes the still, calm darkness, with the scintillant stars, that have looked down on the anxious hearts of men for so many thousands of years, trying to pierce the gloom. All is silent, save for the muffled thud of thwarted waves on the high-banked shingle. Nature is at peace. Only the soul of man is in the turmoil of a dread uncertainty.

Let us sleep : the morrow may bring new hopes.

### THE SECOND DAY

It is a quiet Sabbath morning. In this sequestered village, remote from the busy haunts of men, there is a special air of quiet :—a Sabbath sedateness that effects even the dogs. The sun is shining brightly, and the sea-breeze coming over the old-fashioned garden greets us with a mixed perfume of flowers and ocean as we descend to the morning meal. On such a day the fears of yester-eve seem hollow nightmares. The Torpedo, usually very punctual at breakfast-time, is



nowhere to be seen ; but, as we look inquiringly at each other, there is a rush of racing feet, and he appears, breathless. He brings great news. With the curiosity of a boy he has been out reconnoitring, and reports that the Coast-guards have their revolvers in their belts. I cannot imagine that in such a remote part of the world such war-like demonstrations can be necessary, and as we sit down, I am about to deliver a paternal homily on the advantages of accurate observation and the disadvantages of romantic imagination in recording the fruits of vision, when my own eyes are startled. A Coast-guard is passing the window. The boy is right ! There is a revolver in his belt !

What can it mean ? The air is peaceful as of old ; the cattle are browsing nonchalantly in the adjacent fields ; the sea is still at its murmurous and immemorial task, fretting along the shore ; the calm and quietness of the day of rest is over all ;—but that blue uniformed figure with its armed belt is a menace and a surprise. I look at the Lady ; she looks at me with a question in her eyes. Has war come, between the darkness and the dawning, and are we in it ? The Torpedo reflects our thoughts, but his reason is a different one than ours, when he says : “ I hope there is not a war ; because, if one begins now, it will be all over before I’m old enough to be in the Navy.”

Stray stragglers begin to appear in the village street. There is a question on every one’s lips, but no one knows the answer. The Post Office is sworn to secrecy, and will tell nothing. The



Coast-guard, approached circumspectly, is cautious and non-committal. He will not say more than that the situation is serious. But we know that some time during our sleep a message, urgent and imperative, has come to him from far-off London along the humming wire, and only he and the Postmistress know its purport.

And then the silence is broken by the monotonous clang of the church bells, and, like *douce folk*, we take our way to the little church with the spire. There is nothing in the service to startle. The familiar psalms of David, sung to the well-worn tunes, bring back old hidden memories out of the mist of the years. There is, as of old, a half-hour's sermon; but in all the service there is nothing to suggest that the fate of Christendom is hanging in the balance, except a vague petition in one of the prayers that the threatening cloud may be averted. But not one among us guessed the immensity and awfulness of that cloud.

When the service is over, and the congregation has filed out, the village street is once more filled with little groups of slow-moving people, anxiously seeking for news.

Rumour is again rampant: this one has heard; that one has said; such another straight from London yesterday believed, and so on, all up and down the full scale of human credulity and human hope. Is it war? No one knows. But, thank God, whatever happens, the Navy is all right and will keep our shores inviolate! But where is it? A day or two ago it was marshalled in full force for



a great review. Now it has stolen away and been lost to sight. But it is still the queen of the seas, and, though hidden, somewhere we guess in the Northern mists, will be ready to meet and give battle to the naval might of Germany if and when it shows face.

The calm but anxious, bright but clouded day wears on, and still we can learn nothing. In the early afternoon we wander out and sit on the rocks near the old red sandstone quay. Overhead there is a fair blue sky dappled with fleecy clouds ; in our hearts a struggling hope shot through with apprehension ; before us the grey sea rolls, its surface broken here and there by the white mane of a wave ; and in our hearts the flood of thought rises to full tide, but its waters are troubled by strange questionings. In the rock-pools at our feet the limpets cling, and the beautiful sea-anemones open their fleshy flowers to the sun. They are red as blood ! Far-off Ailsa Craig stands like a vigilant sentinel, and beyond are the hills of Arran, Bute, and the Cumbraes. All is at absolute peace, save our own hearts.

Youth is the age of happiness, because the thoughts of the young are thoughts of a day, and the Torpedo is uplifted with joy over every new shell or every pretty frond of seaweed he finds in the shining pools. But the Lady and I have more serious thoughts. We have known the Germans ; have lived among them, received kindnesses at their hands, and learned to respect them for their scientific attainments. Are our two countries to



fall upon and rend each other ? It seems unthinkable. Surely some way out will be found. The resources of civilization are not yet exhausted, and saner counsels must prevail. But let us face the matter squarely ! Suppose the worst comes to the worst, and we are involved in the war, what then ? Have we an Army on the continental scale, and have we munitions and guns ? We know, for we have seen it, that Germany is always armed to the teeth, and can at any moment strike suddenly and strike hard. While we—— Well, has not Lord Roberts been proclaiming the need of preparation for close on ten years, and we have thought him a fussy old man in his dotage ? O fools and blind ! He knew, but we would not hear. Now, if war comes, there will be an urgent call for volunteers. We shall need men by hundreds of thousands. And doctors will be needed. That brings the problem nearer home. The vision of a possible separation dawns on the Lady, and she lays her hand upon mine, and I know that if need ever arises for me to leave her at the call of duty she will not seek to restrain me.

Yes, if it comes to war, it will be no ordinary struggle, but the most stupendous conflict the world has ever seen. Wherever our colonial frontiers touch Germany's there will be fighting. The conflagration will be world-wide. But surely this hideous wrong against civilization cannot come to pass ! The world has not gone mad ; the age of barbarism is long since dead ! Such a conflict will ruin both countries. What will the



financiers of Europe say ? They might ward off the horror by holding up a hand. Besides, let us not forget that we have no quarrel with Germany. Why, only a few weeks ago an eminent statesman assured us that the relations between the two countries were most friendly. Can the sunshine change to the thundercloud so suddenly ? But let us look the worst possibilities straight in the face. If war does come, what then ? Can the enemy succeed in landing a hostile force on our shores ? If so, even the old men will arm themselves, and not one of the invaders will escape alive. No, Germany cannot invade us. Our Fleet will blow her transports out of the sea and sink their escort before they can cross the Dogger Bank. Thank God for the Navy ! And, whatever happens, we cannot be beaten. Why, at our back we have an Empire on which the sun never sets, and the daughter countries will rally to the defence of their old Mother ! But is the Empire loyal ? We have heard strange and disquieting rumours. Can we count on India, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, to come to our aid ? They are far away—remote from the operations of European politics. Will they recognize that our cause is their cause ? And what of the people at home ? There has been much discontent : strikes and rumours of strikes ; misunderstandings and mutual distrust. Are they sound at the core, or has luxury and selfishness and the opulent days of prolonged peace engendered decay in the nation's heart ? Are the men all



right? and, as war means stern suffering for women too, are our women made of the right stuff? Has the old Spartan breed expired?

But why perplex our minds with such vain speculations? It cannot be! The whole thing is a midsummer madness. The papers on the morrow will prove it.

And old Ailsa, beyond the waste of waters, confronts us in silence, majestic, remote, immutable, as though to remind us that man is but a little thing, and his troubles are but the perplexities of a day. And the moaning sea tells us the same story.

The westering sun ushers the evening in, and once again the bells summon us to service. As we walk to the church we meet some blue-clad figures mounted on bicycles, with a little bundle in a handkerchief over the back wheel. Who are these men? Rumour tells us, and this time she speaks truly. They are naval reservists summoned from Coast-guard's Station and from fisher's hut, hurrying to report at their depots. Of course that may mean nothing. It may simply be a precautionary measure. But we shall know all about it on the morrow!

There is a deeper note in the evening service. The thoughts and uncertainties of the day have touched every heart with a solemn wonder, not far removed from awe. We sing the majestic lines of the hundredth psalm, that psalm beloved of Scots the world over, and our hearts are filled with a quiet confidence: God is over all and above



all, we are His people, and His mercy is everlasting.

There is a more earnest note in the prayers ; a keener sense of appalling calamity if the clouds on the horizon should not melt away. The sermon seems a superfluity. It is an hour for worship and prayer.

Then we pass out into the cool air of evening. From the church steps we can see the Stinchar wandering onward in its ancient bed ; afar the eternal hills, enveloped in purple shadows, stand silent and inscrutable in the twilight ; nearer at hand, in spreading fields, the ripening grain gives token of the coming harvest, and the sea swings in long waves upon the shore, murmuring in unending complaint. All nature is at peace : can it be that all Europe is on the brink of war ? And out of the gathering night the answer comes in the tinkle of a bell, as some belated naval reservist hurries through the village on flying wheels in answer to the summons of the King.

### THE THIRD DAY

Four crowded years have passed,—years that have seen Europe turned into a shambles, and heard the whole world echo with the din of war.

Within sight of the Mediterranean, blue with the tint of an azure unknown to the grey waters that wash the shores of Britain, there is a tented hospital. It is one of the many that stand from Bagdad to Boulogne as white temples of healing behind our far-flung battle-line. It is Saturday



morning, the first Saturday of August 1918. Two hours ago the haunting notes of the "Arouse" have called us to the duties of the day,—and, if one's sleep must be broken by the blare of a bugle, it is a pleasanter thing to awake to hear that musical call rather than the strident notes of the *réveillé*. And now the bugle is rending the silence once again. That is the R.A.M.C. call, and those four long-drawn notes in G at the end of it indicate that a convoy is about to arrive.

If you look into one of the wards you will see a picture of quiet and orderly preparedness. Every vacant bed has clean sheets upon it, and the clothes are folded back, with military precision, each to the same depth in a perfectly straight line. On each bed lies a blue and white bundle tied in a large red handkerchief. It contains the hospital uniform.

The Sister, in her blue-grey uniform with its scarlet-edged cape, bright, cheerful, and alert, is giving a last word of instruction to her assistants. She peeps into the bell-shaped service-tent near the door of her ward. Yes, the V.A.D. has remembered to put the kettle on. Perhaps one or other of the incoming patients may need a cup of tea! It is not strictly in accordance with regulations; but sympathy is a finer thing than regulations, and the tea is her own! Besides, every one of the patients is a fighting man—and the son of a mother! Wouldn't his own mother have the kettle waiting on the hob for him? May another woman not try to do as much? The bother is, the supply of tea is limited: she can only let one,



or maybe two, of the more seriously ill have this extra privilege! Oh, that this awful war were over, and all the men able to go home again!

She has forty vacant beds to fill, and she trusts that her share of the convoy will complete her complement. It is the same in every ward, for a good nurse never likes to see one of her beds empty. Not that she would have men wounded that her ward may be full; but, with a woman's penetrating logic, recognizing that there are wounded men to be dealt with, she would rather that she had them under her own care than that some one else's beds should be full while hers are empty. This is not professional selfishness or professional conceit, but the clamant expression of that maternal instinct that, behind all professional training, goes to the making of a good nurse.

Under the trees near the reception tent a group of stretcher-bearers is gathered. The sergeant-major has given them the "Easy," and they are sitting on the sand smoking and chatting. Inside the tent, at a long table, sits the registrar, and by his side are half a dozen N.C.O.'s with orderly piles of index cards before them. In his hand the registrar has a tabular statement showing the various wards, with, above them, the letters M. or S., according as they happen to be wards given over to the treatment of medical or surgical affections. Each vacant bed is represented by a short vertical stroke, which will be crossed out when a patient is apportioned to it. In this way confusion is avoided.



There is a dull rumble heard in the Chestnut Avenue, and a cumbersome transport wagon, loaded with travel-stained valises, torn kit-bags, and battered iron kit-boxes swings round, with a lurch as it crosses the gutter, to the pack stores. This is officers' luggage—the officer patients have arrived. They come in ambulances, some on stretchers, some as sitting-cases, and under their great helmets one catches a glimpse of thin and sallow faces. Then the men begin to arrive, ambulance after ambulance gliding smoothly up, and stopping without a jerk near the door of the reception tent. Very gently the bearers lift the burdened stretchers from the racks—there are four lying patients in each car—and bear them into the tent, from which, after being duly scheduled and indexed, they are carried each to his appointed ward. The sitting and walking cases—men not so seriously ill, and able to look after themselves—come in little groups of six or eight in a car, and with a brave show of well-being step down from the ambulance, disdaining the kindly help proffered by the hand of a bearer.

Each has a little brown envelope attached by a string to the second button of his tunic. It contains his "Field Medical Card," with a history of his wounds or sickness, and the treatment he has already received. That brown envelope accompanies him from hospital to hospital, from the time he is picked up by the field ambulance until he is eventually discharged to duty or to a convalescent camp. In his left hand he carries a multi-coloured



bag of printed cotton, with a stitched-on white label, which bears his name. This is his "ditty bag," or, as the soldier prefers to call it, his "Blighty bag," and in it are all his most precious possessions. In the bottom of it there is, probably, his wife's most recent letter, crushed and soiled with much fingering, but precious still; and among its jumbled contents that rough outline of a rabbit that the uncertain fingers of his little daughter drew; or a crushed flower that grew on the plant in the window-box at home. All the fabled treasures of Golconda or the wealth of Monte Cristo are as nothing to him when weighed against the trivial but incalculable riches in his little bag.

O women at home, who of your substance and of your time have given grandly; who have accustomed your unaccustomed fingers to the needle, and, week in, week out, have sat in crowded rooms, often in uncongenial company, wearily but smilingly engaged in Red Cross work, here is some part of the fruit of your labours. Your ditty bags—one only of your numerous benefactions—as to the utility and destination of which you may have wondered, have gone to the ends of the earth; they have meant to weary soldiers the tenderest memories of home, they have kept for them inviolate all the priceless tokens of their most sacred affections;—but, more than that, they have let the soldiers know that others besides their own kith and kin have not forgotten them. Was ever so much sentiment, knit with such practical utility,



combined in an article so simple as these "Blighty bags" ?

Yes ! the women of the Empire have proved themselves all right.

As the ambulance cars dispose of their burdens and glide away on noiseless wheels to fetch the patients from the train, let us look at the inscriptions on their sides. Government property is not usually honoured with an inscription, unless it be the mark of the broad arrow. But most of these cars have a bold legend in letters of white on their grey sides above the great red cross. They read : "Presented by ——" : and every grade of Society is represented, from the regent Prince of some Indian native state, to the Sunday School children of a town in Lancashire, or the pitmen of a Fife-shire colliery. Yes, the Empire has shown herself sound at the core.

But let us look into the wards. This is a composite convoy, gathered by ambulance transports from sundry outlying corners of the field of war, landed at an Italian port, and brought hither by ambulance train. Here are men who helped to take Bagdad, others who were spectators of that triumphal but unostentatious entry into Jerusalem, men who have fought in German West and German East Africa, veterans who came through the inferno at Gallipoli, who have fought among the Serbian hills, on the banks of the Italian Piave, and in the shell-tortured land of France. They are of all classes and of all creeds. Some of them hurried from the farthest ends of the earth



when the Motherland was in danger, surrendering, in a great act of renunciation, home and position and prospects, and ready at need to die for the cause.

Yes ! the men of the Empire have shown themselves men indeed.

The day wears on ; the hospital is a hive of humming industry ; patients are being examined and classified ; wounds are being dressed, and in all the hutted offices the clerks are busy filling up official forms. The padres go down to the wards in the sleepy afternoon, each with a little haversack of papers and books—gifts from the folks at home. There is a cheery, heartening word to be spoken to every one ;—and mayhap some poor fellow may be in need of ghostly comfort.

From out at sea there comes the heavy rumble of guns. It may be a submarine chase, or perhaps it is nothing more than gun-practice. Is Loch Ryan sleeping to-day as of old between the guardian arms of the hills, or does she too tremble at the thunder of the guns ? Overheard the aeroplanes drone and hum, one almost lost to sight in the infinite depths of the ether. A khaki-coloured dirigible speeds out to sea, looking from the coign of vantage of the skies into the depths for the terror that glides there in darkness.

And over the wire comes a budget of good news—no flimsy rumours, but substantial facts. The gallant French, with their American and British allies, are hammering the Germans out of Soissons : the dreaded Rheims-Soissons salient is battered



backward into a straight line, and the Germans are falling back on the Aisne.

And sometime about this hour in the afternoon the shadows under the pine-trees that overarch the long hill of Glenapp begin to mellow into a purple dream. I wonder whose eyes are watching them to-day.

The day wears on ; the darkness gathers and falls, and the stars peep out, and then the " Last Post " is sounded, and all should be rest. But no ! Over the telephone comes a message from Headquarters : " Prepare to receive a convoy of New Zealand troops passing through for repatriation. You will take two hundred and seventy-five."

Shortly before midnight we hear the stealthy rumble of the ambulance cars coming up the Chestnut Avenue. The men have begun to arrive. In the reception tent there is a scene of bustle, without confusion. On seats along the canvas sides are grouped dozens of finely built soldiers, well-set-up men, with conical, broad-brimmed hats with a scarlet and black band. They stand quietly too in little groups near the tent door : all handsome fellows, in the prime of youth, but—the pity of it !—maimed and broken in the wars. Among them are some twenty Maoris, strong-looking men with frank, open countenances, dark eyes, swarthy complexions, and raven-black, strong hair. A hundred years ago the ancestors of these Maoris were only beginning to emerge from cannibalism ; now their descendants fight



with cleaner hands than the high exponents of Kultur.

If one desire to know whether British patriotism is a chimera or not, let him look at these New Zealanders. They left their well-kept homesteads in far Otago, or their businesses in windy Wellington, and, at the call of England, the old Mother, came to her aid in the hour of her need. And how they have fought ! And what they have sacrificed ! Let these empty sleeves, those artificial limbs, those unwonted crutches be their witnesses ; and let the bloodstained heights of Achi Baba and Sedul Bahr trumpet the testimony that these are men.

Yes ! the Empire has been true to herself : her sons have not dishonoured their heritage !

By two o'clock on Sunday morning all are safely in their wards, and settling down to rest. They are cheerful, and almost boisterous. This sojourn in our hospital is only an interlude on their journey home. A ship is coaling in an adjacent port, and in a day or two it will bear them away to their homes "down under." Yes, home ! But not all of those who came are privileged thus to return. Many are still in the battle-line striking brave blows for the freedom of humanity. And many are sleeping where they fell, and the thunder of the guns is their requiem. Their dust is mingled with the torrid sand of Gallipoli, the holy earth of Palestine, the clay of Flanders. The green island in the Antipodes which they loved they will see no more. And the



old Motherland weeps with her fair daughter beneath the Southern Cross who has given such noble sons for her defence.

#### THE FOURTH DAY

When the Sabbath sun kindles the eastern sky its earliest rays fall upon row after row of canvas marquees. Taken together, these serried tents—the wards of our hospital—constitute an epitome of the Empire's loyalty and the Empire's effort. For within their walls are resting Englishmen, Scotsmen, Welshmen, and Irishmen, men from the lumber camps of the Canadian forests, and from the fertile plains of Ontario; Australians, New Zealanders, Maoris, Fijians, negroes from the British West Indies, men from the far Transvaal and from East and West Africa. These men have fought in a hundred battle-fields, in every quarter of the world where British honour has required vindication, from Mesopotamia and Palestine to German West Africa, Gallipoli, Salonika, Italy, France, and Flanders. And, to round off the circle, let me not forget that over the stream behind my tent there is a little sunny alcove in a bank of sand, just at the entrance to the sequestered hills, where lies the loyal dust of a few Hindu soldiers who heard and answered the call of their King, but whose eyes will never again behold the turbid waters of their beloved Ganges.

At this hour the incoming tide is doubtless sweeping over the rocks beside the sand-stone quay at Ballantrae, where I sat four years ago



obsessed by perplexing thoughts. If ever I doubted the loyalty of the Empire to the Motherland I have got my answer now.

The vagaries of the calendar have made this, which is the first Sunday in August, the 4th day of the month. Four years ago it was the second, but the whirligig of time, bringing round the revolving months, has caused the anniversary of our entry into the war to fall upon this day of days, and it has been set apart as a Sabbath of remembrance.

My thoughts turn backward, and I recall the many anxious days that we have lived through ; the weeks of torturing suspense ; the agonies of great disasters ; the crash of blasted hopes. And in the picture which memory builds up for me there are two features which develop side by side. One is the moral decadence of Germany ; the other the moral splendour of Britain. Can that foul and loathsome beast whose every footstep leaves blood and cruelty and torture and uncleanness behind it be the Germany that we respected and looked up to as a prince among the nations ere the rude hand of war tore down the obscuring veil ? And can that brave, clean, dauntless figure that has stood unafraid in the way of this monster, growing year by year in strength, stature, and manly beauty be the manhood of Britain—a manhood that in days of old we were tempted to imagine was effete ? Of a truth the war has been an apocalypse : it has revealed those things which were hidden.



The years have been weary and soul-testing ; but they have shown that the heart of the Empire has remained set, and that we still can die for our ideals.

Is it for nothing that to-day the past crowds in my memory upon the heels of the present, and old happenings and old friends rise before me out of the dead days ? I recall old familiar faces—faces of those who, since that quiet Sabbath in the little Scottish village, have made the great sacrifice. There are many vacant places round the table set for my friends in the halls of memory, and these places can never be filled.

My thoughts turn inward. What have I learned from these four testing but revealing years ? I cannot set down the whole of it here, but I have learned much. If I can read the signs aright I have been taught a larger sympathy, though I have lost some of my ideals. I have learned that beneath the veneer of civilization there still lurks in the human heart much that is of the brute ; but I have caught a vision of some of the high heroism and divine self-sacrifice of which our poor humanity is capable. Humanity with wrong ideals and a purely material Kultur may sink in the depths of the mire ; but, with spiritual vision and lofty aspirations, it may tower to the skies.

As I sit in my tent in the hush of the afternoon, which is broken only by the iron chatter of the cigales, my thoughts overleap all barriers of distance and turn homeward.

What of the Lady and the Torpedo ? She is



waiting and watching: anxious often, lonely often, tortured often by suspense—she does not say so, but I can guess—yet without a murmur or complaint, doing her bit in loyal service to less favoured women whose husbands are also away. Thank God for such women! And what of the Torpedo? He too, though still a mere stripling, is wearing the king's uniform in the Senior Service. And, if the war drags on a few months more, the great oaken door at Dartmouth will swing back so that he and many more like him, with the fresh dew of their youth upon them, and the brave light of boyhood in their eyes, may break forth in a great wave to join those other lads whose vigil is upon the hoary waters of the eternal sea.

The drowsy afternoon mellows into the cool of evening. At this hour more than a few will be treading the "kirk-ward mile" to the little church with the spire that looks bravely over the Stinchar. There it will be a day of remembrance too: and, as I think, I hear again that ominous tinkle of the bell in the village street that came out of the gathering darkness four years ago. Here we gather for service at the drum-head under the spreading pines. There is an air of more than usual solemnity around us. Memory is playing strange tricks with us all, and bringing back to each of us poignant recollections, touched here with sorrow, or illumined there by joy. It is fitting to sing "Recessional," the one great hymn of our day which will endure. It helps us to see things in correct perspective:—



“God of our fathers, known of old,  
Lord of our far-flung battle-line,—  
Beneath whose awful Hand we hold  
Dominion over palm and pine,—  
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget.”

I look round that crowded gathering of wounded and broken men: they know what our far-flung battle-line means; they have helped to hold it, they have suffered there, and some of them have called there upon the God of their fathers. What they have lived through they will never forget.

The hymn strengthens us, while it humbles our hearts.

We have long since recovered from the drunkenness of power; we have ceased to “loose wild tongues” of empty arrogance, and we have learned that it is God who giveth the victory.

“For frantic boast and foolish word  
Thy mercy on Thy people, Lord.”

The beautiful prayers, with their simple, felicitous petitions, touch a responsive chord in every heart, and we raise our heads comforted and unafraid. And then, to register once more our unswerving loyalty, we spring to attention and burst into “God save the King.”

Four years have sped on lightning, yet leaden, feet, since that quiet but anxious Sabbath evening in that far-off Scottish village. Four years, big with fate for civilization and for humanity. Four years; in which our Empire has trembled on the



brink of irrevocable catastrophe, but in which it has found itself again.

Yes ! The Empire has been true to itself. Let it be true to its God, and the gates of hell will never prevail against it.



## XI

“ CHARITY SUFFERETH LONG, AND IS KIND ”

**I**N the grey dawn of an October morning Nurse Cavell was put to death with an obscene haste and a studied secrecy which proved to all honest men that her assassins were uncertain as to the legality of their actions. This deed of blood, when it came to light, sent a thrill of horror through the civilized world. There were circumstances of peculiar atrocity about the crime. I believe that according to the recognized standards of international, and even military, law, she had done nothing which merited a capital sentence; and, even if she had, one might have imagined that her services to the sick and wounded Germans, whom she had helped to nurse, would have been put in the scales to weigh against the indictment of her accusers. Be that as it may, she is not the only British-born nurse who has been brutally done to death by the Germans. Some have been killed by bombs dropped from the skies on sleeping hospitals; others have been mown down in the open by machine-guns fired from aeroplanes as they rushed to the succour of those wounded by the death-dealing missiles dropped from the clouds; while many have been



drowned, when, lost to all sense of chivalry, the dastardly commander of some prowling German submarine has fired his torpedo at a defenceless Hospital Ship.

If we look at the other side of the picture we shall find that in this matter Britain's hands are absolutely clean. If it were not so, we should for ever be compelled to hang our heads in shame, for, by all standards of British chivalry, the life and person of a nurse is sacrosanct. In that there is nothing to boast of.

A German nurse may have been wounded or even killed in the course of one of our retaliating air-raids upon German fortified cities, we can look the world in the face and say that we did not will it so, and that we have never dropped bombs, of malice aforethought, upon hospitals or depots for the sick.

It was a lesson in Christian charity to see how devotedly our sisters and nurses, though they had the memories of the grievous wrongs inflicted upon the members of their profession constantly before them, tended the German wounded who came under their care. Many of these women had suffered bitterly through the war. For some it had meant the loss of brothers or father; for others the loss of some one dearer still, and the shattering to fragments of all the tenderest dreams of a woman's heart. And yet, in spite of all this, I have never known a nurse neglect a wounded German prisoner, or fail to place at his disposal all the resources of her skill. To the stern-hearted



woman at home, who viewed the world from a comfortable easy-chair, this may have seemed impossible, or even wrong. But her hardness of heart was the offspring of a restricted vision, which has never been brought face to face with suffering.

A suffering man belongs to no country, but to the kingdom of humanity ; and sympathy with the broken should not be confined by any frontiers. Be it said, to their eternal honour, British nurses saw in a wounded German not an enemy (even though he might have robbed them of brother or sweetheart), but a mutilated and suffering fragment of manhood who needed their professional care, and who was never denied it. They did for him what they hoped and trusted some German woman did for their beloved ; and, though their trust might have been misplaced, they continued to hope on. Let it be understood clearly, however, that they did not slobber over their German patients with gushes of sickly sentiment. They cared for them as wounded men in sore need ; they did not pamper them. And I imagine that the wounded who returned to Germany, carried with them enduring and fruitful memories of the grace of mind, the skill and charity of the nursing profession of Britain.

It is not given to a medical officer to see all the human side of his patients, though sometimes he catches a revealing glimpse that shows him much. But a nurse is with her patients for hours on end ; she gets to know them thoroughly, and her mind becomes a store-house filled with inci-



dents, dramatic, romantic, ludicrous, and pathetic that would furnish a thousand episodes for a study of human life.

I owe the following story to a sister.

One of the convoys which brought down the wounded from the Passchendæle Ridge included a score of German prisoners. For the greater part these Germans were suffering from very formidable wounds.

Among the Germans was a mere slip of a lad, with Saxon features and fair hair. He looked a mere child, and his official age was eighteen years. He had sustained extensive and very frightful wounds and from the first his case was regarded as practically hopeless. The most that could be done was to make him as comfortable as possible, and trust to his constitution and his strength to rally. Like so many Germans, he knew some English, and could make himself understood by the sister, for whom "Ja" and "Nein" constituted a complete German vocabulary. Unlike many of his compatriots, he was extremely patient under suffering. A huge Prussian will scream in terror when a wound is being dressed, where a British soldier will "bite the bullet," and, though his brow bead with perspiration, never utter a groan.

This German boy, as the sister said, was a little Briton—the highest praise, in her estimation, that any man is worthy of. All day long he lay with wide-open eyes watching the sagging yellow roof of the marquee, or following the sister with inter-



ested looks as she moved about. Though almost constantly in pain, he never complained, and never forgot to say, "I tank you, Sister," whenever she did him any service. His youth, his apparent loneliness, his extraordinary patience, and his unfailing gratitude, and her knowledge that for him at least life had little more to offer than a few long hours of pain, drew the sister more particularly to him, and she sought to discover something of his history. In little broken sentences of uncertain but persevering English he told her that he was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. His father had died years ago when he was a child; his mother had struggled and fought to bring him up comfortably, and to educate him well. He was looking forward soon to being able to take on to his own shoulders the burden his mother had borne so long, and repaying her in loving service for all she had done for him. But the Kaiser needed men, and he was called up a year before he expected it. He hated his separation from his mother; he hated war, he had a horror of blood and slaughter; but he loved his country, and he was devoted to his Emperor whom he had never seen, but whom, poor deluded youth, he believed to be the peace-loving victim of a terrible conspiracy engineered by the English and the French. Germany took care that no knowledge of the truth should reach her "cannon-fodder."

Day by day he lost strength, but still he remained patient and uncomplaining. He used to



say to the sister, after his wounds had been dressed, with a quivering voice, in an accent of enquiry, "Leopold good boy to-day, sister?" and with as cheery a voice as she could command she would say, "Yes, very good!" At which well-earned meed of praise his wan face was lighted by a smile.

The night before he died he became delirious, but with no wild frenzy. For that he was too weak; but the watching Night-sister, piecing together the disjointed fragments of his talk, gathered that he was dreaming he was safely home in his mother's house, and that the war was over. Next morning he was conscious, but desperately weak. With a failing voice he asked the sister, "Does my mother know where I am?" She told him that official notification had already been sent through the usual channels, and the knowledge seemed to comfort him.

Half an hour later he asked that he might write to his mother, and the sister propped him gently up and gave him paper and pencil. He wrote for what seemed a very long time, but he did not use more than one sheet of paper. His weakness clogged his efforts. When he had finished he called the sister, and when she had lowered him down, and settled his pillows he said in a whisper: "Dear sister, you have been kind—kind as my mother. I kiss your hand; God bless you," and he laid a feeble hand upon her hand and pressed it to his lips. Two hours afterwards he was dead: a victim of the infernal blood-lust of the god of war.



When gathering together his few personal possessions that they might be sent to his mother, the sister came upon the letter under his pillow. Such letters must always be scrutinized with care, lest they contain any information that may be of military value to the enemy. This was innocent of all evil intent, and was duly forwarded to a lonely woman in Germany, with a covering note telling her how her son had died.

This is what he had written, in shaky and uncertain characters, difficult to decipher even by the interpreter who examined it and read it to the sister :

“MY DARLING LITTLE MOTHER,

“Your little Leopold will never come home again. I have been wounded, and am dying a prisoner in an English hospital. Do not cry, little mother mine. I do not suffer much, and it is the will of God. I thought the English hated us, and killed their prisoners. It is not so. Do not believe it, mother. The English are not cruel, but kind. The sister is good, so good : she has gentle hands, and her voice and eyes are like yours. Good-bye, little mother ; I can write no more. I send you all my heart's love.

“LEOPOLD.”

What did it matter ? He was only a German soldier, and we could not win the war unless we killed them. Their wrong ideals and their lust for power had brought this disaster upon the world,



and their blood be upon their own heads. That is sound British common sense to which I heartily subscribe ; but the pity of it all, and its tragedy, is that others besides those who plot war were sucked into the maelstrom and destroyed. War has been called the game of kings or governments. The stakes are power : the pawns are human lives. Surely after the bath of blood into which practically the whole world has plunged, mankind will have had enough of it. Ask the women of peaceful England ; ask the mothers of France ; ask even Germany herself. Surely the answer will be " Never again ! "



## XII

### THE ART OF LETTER-WRITING

THE art of letter-writing is a gift of the gods, but, fortunately, it is a talent which has been distributed with no grudging hand. As with all arts, there are degrees in its mastership, and it is given only to a few to excel.

Madame de Sévigné and Lord Chesterfield have no modern compeers; but, as the writers of fascinating epistles, they have many rivals among our soldiers, and were it not for those necessary but irksome restrictions under which the correspondence of the trenches is conducted, the future historian would have at his command an immense quantity of vivid, living narrative by which to correct the perspective of the official documents upon which he must rely for his knowledge of events. Unfortunately, the censor's definition of "matters of military importance" is so comprehensive that, when a soldier lets himself go, and, hot from the mouth of the Inferno, flings his glowing thoughts and the quick picture of his experiences into lively and sparkling language, the hard, impassive, unimaginative official pencil obliterates it all, and the letter reaches its destination, emasculate and cold. So, by harsh exper-



ience, the soldier learns to steady his pen when official "secrets" race fleet-foot to its point, and during the war it was the rarest event to come across any vital reference to things which mattered. In strictly military circles this might have been a matter for congratulation, but, from the point of view of literature and history, it is a calamity.

In common with all other medical officers attached to a hospital abroad, it has fallen to my lot to censor many letters, and the experience has taught me a great deal. At first the duty is, frankly, an unpleasant one. One feels that one is, in some sort, an eavesdropper listening to an intimate conversation between two friends. This feeling is accentuated when one is censoring letters from a man to his wife, or from a young soldier to his sweetheart. These letters are often very sacred things, written for one pair of eyes alone, and after a few days of experience one gets into the habit of passing a hawk-like, swift glance over them to see that no place-names or impending military operations are mentioned, and passing them unread. I know that many women at home bitterly resented the knowledge that the little tender things their husbands wrote to them had been seen by other eyes as well; but let them be comforted: there was no personal element in the censor's scrutiny; he did not know them, they do not know him, his memory is probably short, and a sense of honour binds him.

In spite of—or is it because of the universality of education?—a strange similarity marked a



majority of the letters. But sometimes one came across an exotic flower. It was not always the work of a man whose grammar was perfect, or whose spelling was above suspicion, but it bore upon it the impress of originality, of fresh thought, and of the personality that lay behind it. The best letters are always those which reveal the writer : they are living epistles. It is a great thing to be able to pour one's personality through the point of a pencil on to a sheet of paper. In that way literary genius lies, and more than one of our soldiers had the gift, and were completely unaware of it.

It is said that an aspiring small boy, eager to enter the Navy, once on a time astonished the highly moral " hanging committee " at the Admiralty by answering the presiding Admiral's question as to why he desired to join the Senior Service by replying, with enthusiasm, " Because, sir, a sailor has a wife in every port." If that is a true statement, which as a heart-whole admirer of the Navy I take leave to doubt, then many who wore the uniform of the Army ought to have been in the Senior Service. For not once but many times, I have come across letters warm with affection and couched in endearing terms from the same gay philanderer to three or four, or even half a dozen different girls. Sometimes these letters were in almost identical terms ; more than once they were to young women living in the same town. I have a great admiration for the bravery of the British soldier, but a man like that



was a cut above the ordinary military hero. He was a person of stupendous courage; and, like all other brave men, of simple faith, for he was relying absolutely on the chance that the busy censor did not make a mistake, and put the letter meant for Amy into the envelope addressed to Mary, or vice versa. He was also giving hostages to fortune, should, by any chance, the two young women have got to know each other, and compare notes. Although I imagine I know a little of feminine psychology, I am at a loss to tell whether in such circumstances they would have fallen upon each other with heated words, if not with iron fists, or whether they would combined to keep a specially lissom rod in pickle for the gay deceiver, when he returned from the wars. He well deserved the worst they could do to him, for such a man was, wittingly or unwittingly, playing a low game. There would be no harm in such a correspondence were the letters nothing more than the friendly effusions of a lonely man to a handful of girl friends; but when he told them severally that each of them was "the only girl in the world" for him, it was, well—in the language of the Army, "A bit thick."

A fellow-officer assured me that in one morning he censored nine letters—all breathing affection for nine separate girls—from the same man. I wonder if Shakespeare ever acted as a censor of letters, or whether his knowledge that "men were deceivers ever" was evolved from his inner consciousness.



Sometimes there was artifice and self-seeking in correspondence of this kind. An early experience of mine was to come across a most romantic letter from a soldier to a girl whom he did not know. It began "Dear Friend," and then went on to say that the writer was unknown to her, but had picked up a letter with her name and address in it on the battle-field, and was taking the liberty, which he trusted she would excuse, of writing to her. Now, an element of romance like this—the finding of a letter of hers on the battle-field by an unknown soldier—would naturally tend to excite the interest of any woman in her correspondent. He was an artist in guile, this youth, for he ended his epistle by saying, "You will excuse my writing to you; but I am a lonely soldier, without any friends to write to me or send me cigarettes." My interest was excited when, next day, I came across two other letters from the same industrious scribe to two other young women. He began in the same way, but pitched a somewhat different tale. In one case he told the young woman that he had found her photograph, with her name upon it, on the battle-field. And then he had the effrontery to say, "I like your face." If she had known as much about him as I was beginning to do she might have said, "I like your cheek." Both letters ended with the same plaintive statement about his loneliness, his lack of correspondence and of cigarettes.

I began to smell a rat, and carefully laid these letters aside to await developments. Rope being



allowed him, he duly hanged himself next day, for in the pile of letters that awaited my scrutiny there were no less than four, all from the same master-hand. In two he played the battle-field-letter dodge, in the third the photograph trick, but in the fourth he caught his neck in the noose. Practice had evidently emboldened him, for he wrote to the sister of another patient in his own ward. He began as before, "Dear Friend," and then proceeded to say that he had got her address from her brother, and was writing to her without his knowledge and hoped she would not let her brother know, etc., as he might not like it, because he was a brave fellow who believed in keeping his troubles to himself. But he felt she ought to know how ill her brother was: that he was completely paralysed in both legs, and could do practically nothing for himself, but that he waited on him hand and foot "as one pal should on another." And then he ended up this masterpiece of cruel and artful lying with the same mournful plea of being a lonely soldier "with nobody to write to me or send me cigarettes." I think he must have imagined that his letters were censored by the padre, and not by the medical officer of his ward, or he would never have dared to give an entirely fictitious account of the girl's brother, who had nothing more seriously wrong with him than an attack of bronchitis.

I sent for this past-master in the art of the begging letter, and, after tackling him with his duplicity, and handing him six of his letters which



he destroyed in my presence, I “ dressed him down ” with as rough a tongue as I could muster. He professed contrition, and said he had only done it “ for a lark,” without meaning any harm. He informed me that he had procured the names and addresses of the girls to whom he indited his letters from other patients in the ward, some of whom, I imagine, were his accomplices in the attempted fraud. At heart I believe he was quite a good fellow—but with a somewhat unprincipled streak of romance in his constitution. In some walks of life—say company promoting—he would doubtless have attained to eminence.

I remember a curious, sour-faced soldier, in middle life, who wrote to his wife every day. He invariably began his epistle with the words :

“ MY DARLING WIFE,

“ I take up my pen in my hand to write you these few loving lines, hoping they will find you well, leaving me not so bad.”

And then followed the “ few loving lines ” which consisted, day after day, of the most acrid and vituperative language he could command. There was evidently a lively domestic row in progress ; but he ended each round, as he invariably began the next, with words of conventional affection. I wonder how this poor wife enjoyed “ the loving lines.” Unless she were hardened by custom they must sometimes have stung like a whip-lash.

Even the most casual scrutiny of the letters of



the married men gave one delightful peeps into the sunny atmosphere of happy homes. There is hope for the social life of England if its homes are pure, and these simple, cheerful, uncomplaining and heartening letters showed that at bottom the family life of England is all right. The men displayed a fine tenderness and affection for their children. Usually they mentioned each by name and sent some particular little individual message, and invariably the letter ended with an inverted pyramid of crosses, which, I understand, represent kisses. Opposite each line was placed the name of the recipient. Mother, of course, comes first—hers is the longest line; then Mary, with a line a little shorter, and Susie and George, each in diminishing quantity until the apex of the pyramid is reached, and two are found there for Baby. One can imagine the fond mother picking up her mites one by one, and showing them the crosses that stand for daddy's kisses, and then, with a beating heart, converting these symbols into the warm coin of the realm of love. That the children were jealous of their rights is shown from a sentence I remember from one letter. Evidently Father had, like a man, forgotten that Mary was older than Susie, and had sent the latter two more kisses than the former; and there had been sore trouble and a very wounded heart in the little home in Blighty. And when, in due course, this offence was pointed out to daddy, he wrote, "I am sorry I forgot, and sent two more kisses for Susie than for Mary. I must be more careful.



I am sending Mary two extra ones this time.” And there they were—throwing the pyramid a little out of drawing, but meaning so much to a little child somewhere in the homeland.

Letters are the one strong link that keep the affections of a soldier abroad riveted to his home. The links are golden, but they are firm as steel.

Sometimes one dips right into the middle of a heated correspondence between two men, and one can see the sword flash, and hear the clatter of blade on blade. Or, again, one is reminded that the ranks of the Army contain the pick of the intellect of the country. I have come across, and read with profound interest, a long and carefully thought out argument for the existence of God, written by a man who was then an ordinary soldier, to a friend who was apparently uncertain of what to believe. Written, as this must have been, away from all books of reference, it was a *tour de force*, and revealed the remarkable powers of logical reasoning possessed by its writer. I should have liked to discover his identity, but his letter gave no clue to that, as the whole signature it boasted was an initial. But the recipient would know.

Love's fire burns brightly in spite of all the horrors of war, and, as a majority of our soldiers was young unmarried men, our daily post-bag contained many letters to their sweethearts. The old, old tale is told in a thousand ways. No military secrets ever find their way into these



missives, so let us pass them by, and refrain from thrusting rude fingers into these little nests of fledgling hopes.

I have had Fijian letters to censor, but that language is to me a closed book, so they were handed on to an officer of the Fijian battalion.

But the letters of the British West Indian soldiers were among the most amusing I have met with. These West Indian negroes are a curious mixture of child and man. Some of them are very well educated, and can write remarkably good letters. Where the education has been limited or defective their letters are, to say the least of it, quaint. The writers show a passionate love for big words which they cannot spell, and whose meaning they do not quite understand. They frequently succeed in achieving a picturesque novelty of phrase. They tend to be flowery, and they sprinkle their epistles over with half-remembered verses of hymns, or inappropriate and inapposite texts from the Bible in careless profusion. And, sometimes they spin wonderful yarns of the dangers they have come through before they have ever been within sound of the guns.

In winter-time a regiment landed in the North of France and travelled by rail several hundred miles through country covered with snow. One of them, writing to his father, said, "I saw the snow. It was very white. I walked in it." He had!—or he would not have come under my care. With many more of his fellows, he had taken off



boots and stockings and jumped into the snow at a railway-siding to see what it was like. Pardonable curiosity ; but it meant frost-bitten feet. And then, with that curious, pathetic religiosity which is the breath of their nostrils, he added, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." Once they had seen it, snow interested them greatly, and they made many references to it in their letters. Evidently they desired to impress upon their friends at home the fact that they were having unique experiences ; but, as in the case of their references to shot and shell, their statements about the snow were not always accurate. On a particularly hot day, when most of us were gasping for breath, one of them wrote : "Dear Brother, it is very cold here ; it is snowing hard to-day."

One man wrote to his wife, and addressed her as "Most political and perlite Mrs." He was obviously a diplomatist, and will go far.

Another, writing to his clergyman at home—long before he had been anywhere near the fighting line—said : "And all us B.W.I. regimens are fighting hard amid shot an' shell for the King of kings. But, thank God, we'll soon be entering the Hallelujah Harbour : Amen."

Another, with unintentional humour, wrote : "And the Lord looked down upon me, and the doctor drew water out of my knee."

They loved the flowery phrase : "basking" was a pet word of theirs, but it hardly seems in its right place here :—



“DEAR FRIEND,

“I hope this line finds you as it leaves me basking in the Shadow of Death.”

They were comprehensive in their greetings to their friends, every letter containing three or four lines of messages such as, “Say howdie<sup>1</sup> to my Granny and my Aunt Silvia and Uncle John William; and howdie to my Cousin Tom, and howdie to Jack Smith and Mary, and howdie a plenty to all my friends.”

But one careful man, not too prodigal with his affections, writing to his father, said, “Give my love to all who are worthy of it.” He was more general in his affection, though less lavish of it, than the man who wrote, “Kisses for you, my dear sweet child, five thousand.”

The following is a representative specimen given me by a colleague. As the reference to the doctor applies to him, I do not hesitate to reproduce it. It is true:—

*To Mrs. Smith, Esqre*

DEAR MRS. SMITH,

“I’m trusting that the arriving of my few lines to your loving hand may meet the home circle enjoying health, not as it leaves me at present, sick with chest. This is to inform you that I arrive safe and had a fine time on rout to France. I had three days then travelling by train to my destination in line. [He had not yet been near the line.] Exprences I had of various places

<sup>1</sup> Probably a corruption of “Howdye do?”



and how nice the French people are. Well, the hospital which I'm into the nurses are very nice and kind too expressly to the B.W.I. I has a very kind-hearted doctor. I likes him very much for his ways."

One memory remains clearly imprinted upon one's mind amid the cloud of general impressions that one carries away from the censor's duty, and that is of the indomitable cheerfulness of the British soldier. His spirits are like a strong steel spring which recovers rapidly from any strain or stress, and which no ordinary calamity can break. He may grouse a bit—who wouldn't under similar conditions?—but behind all his grouching there is a smile, and, whether he will or no, that smile keeps breaking into his letters.

On the battle-field he has shown the grit that is in him, but in his letters he unconsciously lets one peep into his soul. And the sight of the things there may well make us proud of our fellow-countrymen.



### XIII

“WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE LOVELY”

THERE is so much that is bestial and repulsive about war that the evils it brings in its train far exceed any good it may beget. The last war has taught that lesson finally, even to those who may have been intoxicated with the glamour of martial things, and who had been wont to regard warfare as the school for heroism, and the battle-field as the nursery of chivalry.

Even in a hospital, where, in spite of the awful wreckage of humanity that flows through it, we do not see war at its worst, we are daily brought face to face with sights a mere glimpse of which would convert the most bellicose statesman or the most truculent jingo into an advocate of international disarmament once the crusade in which we are presently engaged has come to an end.

But, even in the foul atmosphere of war, flowers of rare beauty spring up and blossom, and a hospital may be a garden of lovely things. In official circles for one section of a unit to bestow public praise upon another section is looked upon with profound disfavour, and for a medical officer to say what he thinks of those who minister to the needs of the sick and wounded is not in keeping



with traditions. The first to resent praise would be the sisters and nurses themselves ; but, taking my courage in both hands, I wish to pay tribute to them all. Most men know what a difference to his comfort in sickness the care of a good nurse means. But, excellent as are the nurses of Britain in peace time, they excelled themselves in the war. Ask the soldiers ! They cannot speak too highly of them.

I have seen strong men, who had walked through the flames of hell without a tremor, break down under the unstudied tenderness lavished upon them when they have found their way to hospital. It sounds like the cheap sentiment of melodrama, and the sister would deprecate the compliment, but a soldier who had not slept between sheets since he left home, and who came to us straight from the Cambrai push, said to me, with a quiver in his voice, " This bed is a little corner of Paradise ; and the sister is an angel."

Some nurses have the power—it is more or less of a professional pose—of controlling all their finer feelings behind the iron bars of a studied reserve. But for the greater part the war broke down that barrier. They still preserved their professional manner, but behind it, and peeping through it with eager eyes, was all the richness of their splendid womanhood, and the soldier, to whom his sufferings had given unusual powers of intuition, saw and knew. This new attitude was the outcome of a quickened sympathy. The unknowing are apt to imagine that familiarity with suffering begets a species of hardness. This is an absolute



misconception. The most it does is to school a nurse to control her feelings. But in war-time the admiration which every woman must feel (since she is a woman) for a man who has cheerfully endured hardness and been wounded in the fight wells up in her heart and reinforces her feeling of sympathy. But, in addition, another factor comes into play, and, as it is an emotional factor, and women shine best when illumined by the glow of emotion, the nurse engaged in tending the wounded surpassed herself. Practically every nurse was touched in the deep places of her affections by the war. Some of them had fathers or brothers actively engaged in it. Others were eagerly looking forward to the day when they should bear the name of a loved one who was facing awful perils. They were drawn by a special sense of kinship towards their patients. They belonged to the blood-brotherhood ; and, if the icy finger of calamity touched them, and they lost, sweetheart, or brother, or friend, they ceased to look upon their work as a profession, for it became to them a high and holy calling, a divine ministry.

Behind the grey-blue uniform with its red prinkings, which covered her breast, many a nurse bore a heart that was the silent home of a tragedy—a tragedy that meant for her a long and wearisome pilgrimage alone up the highway of life with never the sound of the scampering feet of children, or the silvery notes of their laughter to gladden her on the way.

I do not think that the influence of the nursing



sisterhood in helping to win the war is sufficiently appreciated. Apart altogether from the professional skill they displayed, they had a profound effect in heartening the men. They kept them in good fettle. Every man felt that in the nurse he had a personal friend. He confided to her little things that he would disclose to no other. She was his confidante, his adviser, his source of moral strength. She was a link with the homeland, and if his wounds were not such that he was sent across the Channel she helped him by her cheery optimism to overcome his disappointment, and he went forth again, through the convalescent camp, back to the line, healed in body and refreshed in mind. Many of these men realized what the help of the nurse had been to them, and that they did not forget was shown by the grateful letters that they sent back from the trenches.

At the head of the Nursing Staff was the matron: a lady burdened with many duties. Her position required her to cultivate a certain austerity of manner, for discipline must be maintained. But her heart was all right. Amid the multitudinous duties, great and small, of her office which might be regarded as a sufficient excuse for devoting herself entirely to the administrative work of her post, and leaving the care of the sick and wounded to her subordinates, she found time to make a visit at least once daily to every man whose name appeared on the list of those seriously or dangerously ill. And far into the night, in time of pressure, one might see a



light at her window. While others slept, she was doing the fair works of charity : she was writing to anxious mothers, or wives, or sweethearts in England, telling them exactly how their loved ones were ; softening the more sombre reports with the radiance of a kindly hope ; writing in terms of glowing encouragement when a definite change for the better had occurred ; or taking off the hard edge from the official message, which she knew would precede her personal letter, by giving a tender description of some dead man's last hours. In many a home the world over some of these matrons' letters will be preserved for all time ; they were never altogether written with official ink—sometimes a drop of heart's blood warmed that cold fluid.

Immediately war broke out it was recognized that the number of fully trained nurses who were available for mobilization was inadequate to meet the necessities of the coming rush of wounded. So the Voluntary Aid Detachments were invited to help, and right royally did they respond to the invitation. The V.A.D. was one of the most romantic and useful figures in the war. Many of these young women had no aim in life before August 1914 except amusement. Some of them already occupied positions of responsibility as school teachers or private secretaries. Others had never been confronted with a greater responsibility than the choice of a new hat. But, in spite of the condition of inept, careless self-indulgence in which our otiose civilization con-



demned many of these young people to live, they were at heart women of the right fibre, and they proudly responded to the call. They sat down to accustom their minds to hard study, and to train their hands to difficult work. They had to steel their hearts to unpleasant sights and unattractive tasks. But they did it : and every hospital along our battle-line could bear testimony to the splendid and ungrudging services of the V.A.Ds. Many people unkindly imagined that, once the glamour of romance was dimmed, they would grow tired of their work ; but it seemed that they grew to love it only the more, and were as keen about it as the most eager professional nurse. And they had a quality of which long years of service tend to rob the fully trained nurse. They were for the most part buoyant with youth, and they brought an atmosphere of freshness into the wards, which reacted alike upon the trained nurses and the patients. They endured hardness willingly, and in the records of the war not the least beautiful page is that which tells of the devoted services of the V.A.Ds.

Then there were the Hospital orderlies. Some of them were men who had been wounded or had broken down while serving with Field Ambulances in the line.

They were no longer fit for such arduous duties, but they could carry on in a hospital. Others were men of poor physique belonging to low official categories. Unfit for combatant service, they were drafted into hospital work. If the



public read the lists of these men and saw what occupations they had followed in civil life, this knowledge must have come as a revelation. One young man, industriously and uncomplainingly performing menial and unpleasant duties, was a student for holy orders. He will make all the better clergyman because he was thus brought into close personal touch with suffering humanity. Another was a university graduate with first-class honours in Mathematics. He took a pride in the mathematical precision with which he straightened disordered beds. Another was a cathedral organist, accustomed to make wonderful music out of wisps of wind. In France he played a grander symphony than ever he did before: it was the symphony woven of human affection and consecrated service. It has come to us as a tradition that Brother Lawrence praised God among his pots and pans—and the tradition quoted as a proof of the divine dignity of the menial task performed in the right spirit. That old-time saint has many modern imitators. They may not have praised God vocally in the midst of their lowly duties, but consciously or unconsciously they walked in the honoured footsteps of Him who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

But it was among the men that one had a daily revelation of the beautiful things that redeem war from sheer hideousness.

The tenderness of a good woman is a thing of surpassing grace, but it is a mere shadow when judged beside the compassion of a strong man.



In the wards of a military hospital there is nothing the men will not do for each other. Their affectionate devotion to the more seriously wounded has in it a quality of the divine. If they can help him they will. Is blood needed to restore his vitality, or skin required to graft over some particularly hideous burn? They are ready to quarrel with each other to do the sufferer this service—though he has no real claim upon them except that of common humanity and common suffering. What they have come through has not scorched their souls into withered shrivellings, but ripened them to a rich maturity.

They exhibit an eager and practical sympathy with genuine suffering, but at the same time show a vigorous intolerance for any one who in their opinion—and their opinion in this matter is wonderfully accurate—is assiduously “swinging the lead,” in the hope that by so doing he may deceive the medical officer and be retained in hospital for an undue period, or even be successful in finding his way to Blighty.

Would you know how tender a soldier can be? Then read this letter—the production of a man who for months had been living in the charnel-house of the trenches, and who had escaped at the cost of grave bodily torment to hospital for a little while. The pathos of the letter has a throat-gripping intensity about it. Remember that he was going back to the trenches, and that he might never live to see his child again: and if you can read it without a mist gathering in your



eyes you are unworthy that such men as he who wrote it should risk their lives to keep you safe from harm. It was not written for your eyes or mine—so that the feeling it exhibits is no artificial exhalation.

"MY DEAR LITTLE BABY,

"This is your birthday, and I must send you a letter just to tell you that your old daddy is thinking of his wee girl, and that his heart is full of love for her. Poor wee soul, you won't understand just what it all means to your dear mother and daddy. You are just like a small rosebud yet, and your daddy hopes that God will spare his little girl to grow into a lovely pure white rose; not a brilliant flower blazing in the sun, but just a wee modest white rose growing in the shade of God's great love.

"Dear little baby, you are far, far away from your daddy, who has scarcely seen you, and whom you don't know any more than just what mother tells you of him; but, though many hundreds of miles divide us, my heart goes out to you and mother. You, my baby, have a great lot to thank your dear mummy for, more than ever you will be able to repay, and when you reach the years of sense and understanding I hope you will read these few lines and remember your best friend on this earth—your mother. Well, good-bye, my little white rosebud, and may the Father of all little children be gracious to you. Love and kisses to you and mother from

"YOUR OWN LOVING DADDY."



Then there are the friends of the dangerously ill. They were too far from England for many of them to come, but when the hospital was farther north it was often possible for fathers and mothers or wives to be brought over the grey strip of the Channel to spend the last sacred hours with their beloved, or, not infrequently, watch the shadow lift, and welcome their soldier back from the "No Man's Land" that borders on the river of death. They came from all parts of the British Isles, gently shepherded and cared for by the Red Cross officials, who in this, as in a thousand other ways, rendered matchless service.

Let us take a kindly glance at two of them. A little woman, with faded roses in her cheeks and a face wrinkled like a shrunken apple, is sitting beside a bed. On the locker near her is a bowl of red valerian, "The Pride of Devon." Speak to her, and she will tell you she is from the West Country—"up along of Ilsington way." You have visions of a wind-swept moor with scampering ponies and sweeping mists, and the black chine of Hay Tor. If memory does not err, Ilsington is at an elbow of the road two miles away. You ask her: and her eyes sparkle. Here in France, where everything is unfamiliar, she has found a stranger who knows the countryside from which she has come. Possibly you have passed her cottage. There is honeysuckle on its walls, and "Devon Pride" in its garden. You cannot recall it exactly, but you promise to look in and see her the next time you are "up along" that way.



As you talk to her you notice she has something in her hand. It is a little brown egg. The sister tells you, when you have passed on out of her hearing, that she arrived last night, laden with a basket of eggs. The rule is that all articles of diet must be delivered to the sister, and the basket of eggs is now safely in her care. But the little old woman, with the soft Devonshire speech, has asked that she may keep one. "For if Tom wakens up he'll be proud to see that I've brought him an egg laid by his own little black hen." So she sits by the bed, waiting, and waiting, and waiting with a sure and simple faith that when her boy wakes up—he has been unconscious for three days—the brown egg is going to be a talisman that will work wonders. Faith can remove mountains. Let it at once be said that when that dear old simple soul left us her lad was out of danger and well on the way to health again. Neither sister nor nurse nor doctor will grudge to the little black Devonshire hen and its magic egg due credit for its share in his recovery. The love of a mother is a thing beyond all human understanding, and charged with a wisdom that neither training schools nor universities can impart. The black hen may well have cackled proudly.

Beside another bed is sitting a good-looking girl with a proud light in her eyes. Her hand is on an empty sleeve that has found its way outside the coverlet. The young man in bed is frightfully disfigured about the face—and is stone-blind. They present a striking contrast. At home she is



probably a shop-girl of the better class, or possibly a typist. But there is something almost regal in her bearing as she sits there. Even the broad collar of "coney-seal"—the doctored pelt of some unadventurous rabbit—which encircles her neck and falls over the gentle curves of her maidenly figure cannot, poor shoddy thing though it be, altogether rob her of her queenliness. That girl is a heroine. Her soul is far bigger than yours or mine. The mutilated soldier in bed is her "boy." Sore wounded and blind for all time, he had offered to release her from her pledged troth. But she would have none of it. Fast as the regulations would permit she hurried to his bedside, to fling her strong arms about his neck and press her warm lips on his scarred face, and whisper in rapid, trembling words that she would not, would not, would not give him up, but that she was his for ever. For love is stronger than death: and the love of a good woman is an unquenchable fire. Poor little pretty child! She made this sacrifice of loyalty with gladness, but with a gnawing dread in her heart. When she said "Good-bye" to the sister she asked her a question. Let us put it quite directly, as she did. She said, "Sister, if I should have any babies after I marry him, will they be blind?" Old Mother Nature is not so cruel as that, and sister said firmly, "Certainly not. They will be just like other children." And the girl who had looked at her mutilated boy without any outward sign of emotion threw her arms round the sister and



sobbed on her shoulder, " Thank God, thank God, thank God."

Awful though it is, war has, we see, redeeming qualities, for its attendant circumstances give opportunity for this display of many of the finer attributes of our humanity.

But these flowers of human conduct which blossom over and above it cannot obscure its hideousness, and one dare not justly say that it is war which imparts these qualities to man's soul. The most it does is to force them to display themselves. Equally beautiful flowers of the spirit will blossom in a kindlier atmosphere, and it is poor and shallow reasoning to seek a justification or a palliation for war in the altruism or self-sacrifice for which it offers a field.



## XIV

### THE GOLDEN CHAIN

FOR hours the rain had beaten a tattoo upon my tent, and, now that it had ceased, every guy-rope was as taut as a violin string, and the tense canvas resounded like a drum-head to the flick of a finger. I must slacken the guy-ropes, or ere morning the tent-pegs would be torn out.

I pass through the open door into the night. The air is fresh and cool, and sweet with that wholesome fragrance that only the rain can impart. A gentle night-wind trails through the trees, and the moonlight lies in great silver splashes on the wet earth. Great clouds, like huge drifts of snow, are moving across the sky, and somewhere beyond the water-course an owl is hooting drearily. The moonlit mountain crags are lifting their white brows proudly above the clustering pine-trees. They are keeping guard over the Hindu graves.

Beyond the water-course there is a little alcove in a bank of sand, and from it rise six little wooden crosses. I can see them, bathed in the soft moonlight. Beneath them lie the dust of six good men and true, who at the call of the Great Raj left their homes and came over the mysterious waters of the sea to serve him here. For them it was a



great adventure, the greatest they ever embarked upon, and it ended in a greater adventure still—the mystery of death. And now their ashes rest under an alien soil far from the sun-burnt plains of their native land. But the eternal hills watch over them, and the same kindly moon and the same impassive stars as look down upon the little villages in far-off India, where once they lived and loved, shine over their resting-place.

These graves are a witness and an answer.

High among the hills of the Indian frontier, under forgotten cairns of stone, lie the bones of many a white man who has laid down his life that peace, unbroken by pillaging mountain-tribes, may dwell among the villages of the plains. That has been a part of the white man's burden, and he has borne it well.

And in the hour of the Empire's need India, grateful for the probity and fairness of British rule, rallied to help her, giving with a loyal and generous heart the best of her sons and the unstinted treasures of her wealth.

Only by sacrifice can sacrifice be repaid, and these lonely graves are part of India's acknowledgment of her debt to those deserted cairns among her northern hills.

We may not be a wise people, but we love justice; and the measure of our merit is the loyalty of those we rule, and their readiness to suffer with us in our hour of need.

Years hence some casual passer-by may stop beside these graves and wonder what their history



is. He may discover that they are the tombs of British soldiers, but he is hardly likely to recognize that each of them is a link whose brother link in the golden chain which binds the Empire together is somewhere in the Indian hills.

“Never the lotus closes, never the wild-fowl wake  
But a soul goes out on the East wind that died for Eng-  
land’s sake—  
Man or woman or suckling, mother or bride or maid—  
Because on the bones of the English the English flag is  
stayed.”



## XV

### THE VISITANT

WHEN the puling infant which afterwards became Private Michael McCarthy was born Nature must have run short of comely features, for she gave none to him. His eyes did not match with each other; his badly shaped nose seemed uncertain as to where the mid-line of his face was situated; his ears were a job lot which had evidently been intended for two different people, and his hair, which was a lustreless black, bristled like the spines on the back of a hedgehog. But to make up for these indignities, thus openly thrust upon him, Nature had given him a heart of gold, and before he had been with us a week every one in the ward had discovered it. He was full of high spirits which no misfortune could quench or disaster disturb. Indeed, but for his dogged tenacity and invincible optimism, he would have succumbed to his wounds, which were formidable. He had the Irishman's quick wit, with an unfailing sense of humour, while his patience was a revelation even among men whose capacity for meeting adversity with a smiling face would have taught a lesson to Job himself. He had sustained shocking in-



juries. One leg had been blown off just below the knee; he had been shot through the left lung and still retained the bullet in his chest; and, in addition, he had been burned on the scalp and forehead by one of those devilish devices which German Kultur has introduced into modern warfare—the flame-throwers. He ought to have died on the field, but he didn't; and, though we expected him to die after he was brought in to us, he persisted in fighting on and won the battle. He was ugly, but he was game—grit all through.

From the first he took a lively interest in his progress. When the sister bade him "Good morning," he would exclaim: "Ye see I'm here yet, sister; ye can't get rid o' Micky McCarthy"; and when night came after a wearing and tedious day he would say, "I'm still swingin' the lead." One day, when he had begun to recover, he begged for a mirror, a request which was refused, as the sister feared that the shock he would receive from the sight of his scarred and disfigured forehead and scalp, which by this time were healed, might upset him. But he was not to be thwarted, and when the sister was at the other end of the ward he reached out a hand and helped himself to the shaving-mirror of the patient in the next bed. He studied his poor disfigured face long and earnestly, and when the sister took him his dinner he announced quite calmly what he had done, and added, "It's the foine sight I am, sister; I was ugly enough before, but by the



saints I'm a beauty now. Me own mother, God bless her, wouldn't know me." Then, with his usual buoyancy of spirits, he continued: "But what does it matter? Beauty's only skin-deep, and I'll be spared a heap o' trouble from the girls. If I wasn't such a sight they'd all be running after me, letting on it was meself they wanted, and no my bit pension. There will be never a wan o' them to bother me now," and he laughed, to cover the sob that was breaking into his voice. With an unaccustomed dimness before her eyes, the sister looked at the lad. His forehead was disfigured by a row of reddish-blue scars where the jets of the flaming liquid had struck him. One ran down to his left eye-brow as though it were a congealed gout of blood; while the front part of his scalp had been completely burned away, and replaced by a sheet of tightly-drawn, hairless scar tissue. He was indeed "a fine sight," and the sister turned away to hide the emotion she felt.

He had been with us for more than two months when the news came that he had been awarded the Victoria Cross—that high guerdon of magnificent bravery; and then, for the first time, we learned how he had come by his wounds. To us he had never breathed a word of his doings, and we had imagined that he was an ordinary battle-casualty. The truth was he had been wounded by a shell, and lost his limb in an attack upon a German trench. The attack had been repulsed, and Micky had been left in "No Man's Land"



not far from the German lines, when the wave of our advancing men rolled back. While there, he had been caught by the spray of a flame-thrower and sustained his ghastly burns. As he lay in the open he saw one of his officers lying some twenty yards from him, wounded, but still alive, and the target for occasional sniping shots from the German trench. With great difficulty Micky dragged himself over to the officer. He was very particular to explain to us that he did this because he wanted a bit of company, and a smoke, and "An officer always carries a cigarette-case, and I thought he might give me a fag." Arrived beside the officer, Micky discovered that he had become unconscious ; so, "As I didn't like to pick his pockets, I didn't get a smoke." The rest of the story Micky would not tell us ; but the official records supplied it. When, in the dark the dauntless men of the R.A.M.C.—those quiet and unobtrusive heroes of the stricken field—went out into "No Man's Land" they found Micky lying doubled up in such a position that his body completely shielded that of the officer. He had laid himself down as a rampart of living humanity between the bullets of the enemy and a man sore wounded like himself, and remained there for hours, a target for pitiless German marksmen. It was here he had been wounded in the lung.

Now, any ward which is privileged to house a soldier who receives the Victoria Cross partakes of a borrowed glory, and Micky's ward became



the Mecca of the whole hospital. He received congratulations from every one—from the officer commanding and the matron to the youngest V.A.D. and the bugler. Congratulations embarrassed him seriously. He blushed profusely, and the most he would say was, "It's the proud woman my mother will be." But he confided to the orderly that he would sooner have smoked one of the officer's "Abdullas" than won the V.C. for shielding him, and he added: "There's lots deserve it better nor me. It was just a bit of luck that I happened to fall asleep beside the officer, and the 'poultice wallopers' <sup>1</sup> can always tell the tale."

A day came when Micky was fit to transfer to England, and his "Blighty ticket" apparently afforded him more unadulterated joy than the knowledge that he was to receive his well-won honour from the hands of the King.

It was a Sunday morning. The convoy was to leave hospital next day, and I was sitting in the little canvas-screened alcove near the door of the ward, at a table covered with an army blanket, writing up the last details upon the field-cards of those who were going home. As always on the eve of an evacuation from hospital, there was considerable suppressed excitement in the ward, for men never quite lose the school-boy touch. As I wrote I heard a light footfall, and then a woman's voice addressed the sister who was standing beside me. There was a musical soft-

<sup>1</sup> A term of endearment applied by soldiers to the R.A.M.C.



ness in the voice that attracted me, and I rose and turned toward the visitor. Framed in the light of the doorway stood a woman clad in a nurse's costume, but not in the uniform of our hospital or any of those near it. From head to foot she was dressed in white. Her nurse's cap fitted tightly over her head, hiding all her hair except two smooth dark coils that had strayed beyond the cap's white margin and lay firm pressed on each side of her forehead. There was only one bit of colour on her uniform, and that was a bright red cross that lay like a splash of blood on the curved whiteness of her breast. Her face was pale, but beautiful: oval in outline and graced with delicate features. But it was her eyes that held one. They were dark and tender, but they lit up with a lambent fire when she spoke, and when she was silent they were like quiet pools of thought—of thought touched by sorrow and sanctified by pain. Even the most attractive nurse loses her beauty when Time has chiselled long enough at her lineaments; but to those who have never lost their sympathy with suffering there comes a new charm which Time cannot efface or destroy. It is the beauty of the soul, speaking through the eyes, to all in sore distress. It is always difficult for a man to tell the age of a woman in uniform, and in this instance I was completely baffled. Sometimes, when her face was in repose and the thoughtful look came into her eyes, she looked old; and then, next moment, so complete was the change that she



might have been anointed with the chrism of perpetual youth.

“ May I come in, sister ? ” she said. “ I hear that one of your patients has won a Cross for bravery, and I should like to see and speak with him.”

The sister looked inquiringly at me, and replied : “ The medical officer is still in the ward, and during his round no visitors are permitted ; but——”

And then I interrupted her : “ Certainly, sister ! My round is finished : by all means let nurse see Micky.”

The visitor bent her head in acknowledgment, and sister said, “ Come.”

I do not know what impelled me to it, but I followed them into the ward. When she came to the first bed she spoke to its occupant, and again I was arrested by the music of her voice ; but I was also struck by the intensity of the influence that seemed to radiate from her. As she talked to the man there seemed to be no one else for the moment in her world but him, and he was obviously fascinated by the glamour of her presence and her speech.

She went from bed to bed, with a gentle inquiry here, a word of encouragement there, a smile and a touch of her white hand for another, casting a spell about her. The ordinary visitor has a genius for locking up the soldier's heart. Most men lapse into a kind of bored and stolid silence, with lips closed as tight as the shell of an irritated



oyster when the well-meaning, but often misguided, casual visitor assails them. It may have been the heartening influence of their expected transfer on the morrow, or it may have been the familiarity of the nurse's costume, but none of the patients were tongue-tied to-day.

Morrison, the big raw-boned Scot, taciturn as a Galloway hill, had suddenly become expansive. He told the nurse more in five minutes than he had told any one during the previous month.

"And have you got your Blighty ticket?" she asked.

"I hae that, nurse, and it's the prood man I'll be when I get owre tae Scotlan'." And then in a rush, almost as though his speech had broken its barriers like a mountain-torrent in spate: "I've been gey worried about the missis this wheen weeks back. She says she's a' richt; but I can read atween the lines, and I can see she's far frae bein' hersel'. Ye see sin' wee John had the fever in the winter time he's been raither delicate, an' me bein' awa', and a' that, the puir lassie's had a' lot on her mind, and I'm feared it's tellin' on her. She's no strong at the best o' times, and she lost twa o' her sisters in a decline; so ye can unnerstan', nurse, I'll be gled tae get back." And then, confused at discovering himself laying bare his whole heart to an unknown woman, he flushed to the roots of his hair, and was silent.

With that intuitive gift which is peculiarly an



attribute of woman, the visitor understood his sudden pause, for she waited a moment and then said : “ So you have a little boy, whose name is John. Tell me about him. How old is he ? ”

“ He is fower past, last Christmas : and a bonnie bairn he was when last I saw him mair than a twalmonth sin. I wunnder if he’ll ken me noo ! ”

“ Of course he’ll know you,” she said ; “ why, his mother will talk to him about nobody else but his daddy. You just wait and see. And perhaps, when you get home, you’ll find your wife is all right. Is John your only child ? ”

“ He is that, nurse, and I hope he’ll be spared to be a man.”

“ For whom is he called ? ” she asked.

“ For his grandfeyther on the mither’s side, nurse ; he was a fine man.”

“ Do you know,” she said, “ I had a son ; he was not called John, but he had a very dear friend called John. It is a beautiful name.” And then she bowed her head, and from her belt took two flowers,—one a rose in full bloom, and the other only a bud. “ I hope they will keep fresh till you get home,” she said. “ I want you to give the full-blown one to your wife. Tell her it is from a woman who, though she doesn’t know her, can feel for her in her loneliness ; and give the little bud to John, your boy who was born on Christmas Day. Good-bye ; and a good crossing to Blighty.”

The man took the flowers with a somewhat



tremulous hand, and as he said "Thank you, nurse," there was something in his eyes that looked uncommonly like a tear.

And then she came to Micky's bed, and, breaking through the restrictions of hospital etiquette, she sat down upon it, and, taking his hand, said : "I wish to tell you how proud we women are there are men so brave as you. I have heard what you did ; it was a noble thing. I am pleased that the King is giving you the Cross."

For once in his life Micky was struck dumb. As a rule he was as ready of speech as the readiest of his race ; but something seemed to fetter his tongue. At last he manage to blurt out : "Thank you, nurse ; but the story is all eye-wash. There's lots o' men have done bigger things than me, and got nothing for it."

"That is not quite true, Micky," she said ; "for though, in the heat of battle, many a gallant deed escapes notice, God sees them all, and every man will come to his own reward in the long run."

"I wasn't thinking of that," said Micky ; "I was only meaning army decorations."

She looked at him and smiled, and then, as though shocked by the hideous disfigurement of his face, the smile died out of her eyes and she said very gently, "I see they have wounded your head. My son was wounded in the head too—all his brow was scarred."

And then Micky found his tongue again : "Have you a son fighting in this war, nurse ?"



“ Yes,” she answered, “ in this war : this awful war against evil.”

“ What is he in ? ” asked Micky, the professional soldier waking within him. “ I wonder if I ever saw him ? ”

“ No,” she said, after a minute’s pause, during which she laid a hand over her heart as though to still some sudden tumult there, “ I don’t think you ever saw him ; but I expect you have heard of him. He was the first soldier to be crucified in this war.”

Then Micky forgot himself—and who will blame him ? “ The dirty, swinish devils ! The damned fiends ! ” he exclaimed ; and then bit his lips, and said shyly, “ I beg your pardon, nurse ; I remember hearing about that Canadian sergeant, and to think of him always makes my blood boil.”

She smiled at him with understanding, and then said quietly, “ It is difficult to love our enemies, isn’t it ? No ! my son was not the Canadian sergeant, but I think the Canadian sergeant must have been a friend of his.”

And then, as though to ease the ache in her heart which these poignant memories had provoked, she turned the conversation into other paths, asking Micky about his home, his mother, and some of those other little intimate affections that a man hides in his heart, but which the discerning hand of a good woman can so easily lay bare. Then she rose to go ; but, as she did so, she took another flower from her belt and held



it towards Micky. "Will you please give this rose to your mother?" she said, "and tell her it is a little token of love from a woman whose son died in this war."

As he took the flower Micky, with the inborn instinct of the gentleman he was, raised her hand to his lips and kissed it. That is not a custom common to our race, but just then it seemed strangely fitting.

And then she passed down the ward, bidding a cheerful good-bye to all the "Blighty patients," and dropping a word of sympathy to all who were left behind. Her words, and the radiant smile with which she spoke them, did much to blunt the keen edge of their disappointment.

When she reached the door of the marquee she looked at our wonderful Chestnut Avenue, beautiful with its thousands of flower candles, and, turning to the sister, said, "How perfect, and how pure!" Then she gave her her hand in farewell, saying, "Thank you, sister: I hope my visit has done your patients no harm."

Then she turned to me with outstretched hand, which I took and held. "Good-bye," she said, looking straight at me with her wonderful eyes. "My son was a physician too."

And then the revelation burst upon me, and I felt I wanted to drop on my knees at her feet. But she withdrew her hand and walked lightly toward the avenue. I turned and looked at the sister, but there was a voice from the ward calling her. It was Micky. He was sitting bolt upright



in bed, his face transfigured with sublime beauty and his eyes lit with the fire of spiritual vision. "Sister," he called, "sister! She is the holy Mother of God!"



## XVI

### “HOME, SWEET HOME”

THE war-zone is the arena of strange happenings, and sometimes amusing incidents. Humour crops up in unexpected places, at unexpected times. Not long ago I was the witness of a quaint demonstration of the British soldier's psychology. A concert party, consisting entirely of French people, came to entertain our patients. It was a pleasant summer afternoon, and the concert was held in the open under the shade of a cluster of trees. There was a large and very appreciative audience, and the entertainers—talented lady and gentlemen amateurs—gave us of their best, and their best was no mean feast. Though Tommy's mind often runs to rag-time music, and the wishy-washy sentimental song of the music-hall, he has a fine sense for what is really good; and, though he may not always understand it, his love for classical music, when well executed, is very genuine.

Our entertainers were a gifted party. There was a violinist upon whose strings one could hear the feet of the fairies dancing; a 'cellist who made his trembling cords sob with woe, or rumble like the echo of far-off thunder; pianists who



played with supreme skill, and several excellent vocalists. All the vocal items were in French, and every bit of the fine programme was genuinely appreciated except the second last item. It was "Home, sweet Home," sung in English by a young French girl. It was announced before she came upon the platform that she had been studying English for only a few months, but she was anxious to give the soldiers a real treat by singing to them one of their "own dear songs in their own language." Psychologically the British soldier is a perplexing and insoluble puzzle to our French allies. They simply cannot understand him. Where a French regiment will burst from the trenches shouting, in a fine fervour of ebullient patriotism, "*Vive la Patrie!*" an English soldier will go over the top exclaiming, "Come on, boys. Don't keep the old bus waiting," or "This way for the early door," or letting off in some such funny catchword the patriotic *élan* which expresses itself so differently among the French. Tommy means exactly the same thing as his blue-coated brother-in-arms the Poilu; but he is constitutionally shy of betraying his patriotism in emotion, and, though he may be ready to die for his country, will never by word of mouth proclaim to the world that he is going to do so.

I am sure that all our French friends anticipated that this song would touch the soldiers deeply, and plunge them one and all into a sea of reminiscent and lachrymose delight. But they misunderstood their men. In the presence of ladies Tommy



always behaves like a gentleman : and, though obviously amused, the men preserved a grave and expectant demeanour. I overheard one remark, on the heels of the announcement, *sotto voce* but expressively, " Oh Lor ! " and I knew that he was voicing the general sentiment. The vocalist came to the edge of the platform. She was greeted with a cheer, but it was more by way of thanking her for her previous efforts than to encourage her in her new adventure. The accompanist began to play, and in a moment the clear, bell-like voice was singing the old, old song with excellent expression and considerable feeling. But Tommy was utterly bored, though a little amused, and with difficulty restrained himself from laughing at the problem which the letter " w " presented to the vocalist. On her lips " sweet " sounded suspiciously like " suet," but Tommy held on to his seat, and managed with a tremendous effort to keep his face straight. The verses were received in stolid silence, but when the last verse came I heard a voice behind me saying, " Give her a shout, lads ; she's a good trier, at any rate," and when the song was ended the singer was rewarded with a very hearty cheer.

But Tommy was not moved. Not a man there had even a mist before his eyes. He was really a little annoyed : and, if our French friends could have looked into his soul and seen what was there, they would have been utterly bewildered. The Briton may on occasion wear his heart on his



sleeve ; but he will not let any foreigner, even in the form of a charming and young ally, lacerate it there.

A few minutes later we had a fine demonstration of French enthusiasm. Led by the girl who had sung the old English song, the party joined in the *Marseillaise*, and in the singing of it became transfigured. They were no longer French men and women. Each of them was France personified : with head thrown proudly back, and staring eyes challenging the vault of heaven. No more striking proof of the contrast between the Gallic temperament and the Anglo-Saxon could have been imagined than by the juxtaposition of these two songs.

And yet every Briton loves his own home, be it noble mansion or three-roomed cottage, with an ardour and affection which equals, if it does not surpass, the Frenchman's devotion to his country. But he becomes embarrassingly self-conscious if an unthinking hand endeavours to tear down the veil behind which he hides all his finer feelings, and would expose them naked to the gaze.

Home ! What does it mean to a man who realizes that he may never again be privileged to see it ? What visions and memories does the thought of it conjure up ? These things cannot be uttered in our common speech. But one can guess what home means, when one sees the glad light break in the weary eyes of a sick man when the stretcher-bearers come to carry him to the ambulance that is to take him on the first stage



of his journey. Or one can realize in some measure what it means when one sees half the hospital filled by men who have served for four long years and, broken in body though indomitable in spirit, are waiting to be drafted to home—"down under." All their sufferings are forgotten. The hideous nightmare of what they have seen and endured is only a cloud on the far-off horizon: their faces are towards the sun—they are going home! As one of the New Zealanders said: "I've fought on Gallipoli, I've eaten sand and killed Turks in Palestine, I've been on the Western front and I've lived in Hell; but what does it all matter—what does my lost limb matter, and all I've come through, now I'm going home?"

One of the most soul-touching things I have ever seen occurred at the time when the Germans were making their last tremendous effort to smash up the British Army and secure a speedy victory. For a few weeks, as our politicians have now revealed to us, though at the time all of us in France were acutely aware of it, the armed might of Britain was in jeopardy. With record speed reinforcements were hurried across the Channel, and the old Mother beckoned some of the children whom she had sent to keep the farther gates of Empire to come to help defend the gateway to her heart. So they came—fine, upstanding lads from the lowlands of Scotland, who for a long spell had been fighting bravely in the near East. Some had not seen "the hills of home" for several years, but in the interval their eyes had rested



proudly on the storied minarets of Jerusalem. And now—they were summoned home! So at least most of them thought—for only their officers knew how things really were on the Western front. They disembarked, and encamped not far from us: swarthy, hard-bitten men, in years little more than boys, but in experience veterans. We knew what lay before them: they did not; so to make their sojourn beside us as pleasant as possible, we set ourselves to entertain them. The nursing staff and personnel regaled them with a concert—the first they had heard for many a long day, and they almost tore the heavens to shreds with their cheers when a nurse sang them songs of their "ain countrie." But they roared with mirth when a sergeant with a fine voice proceeded to sing them "Songs of Araby"; they knew enough of the desert without that—and, they were going home!

They came stealing round the hospital marquees, where, of course, they were not supposed to come, and would make furtive and shy overtures to the sisters, every one of whom, with a fine contempt for regulations, the breaking of which on occasion eases the heart, kept a kettle on the boil lest any of them should care for a cup of tea. The delight of these boys was a treat to behold. For years none of them had spoken to an Englishwoman—and, in the gratitude of their hearts at such royal treatment, they would press upon them little souvenirs from Palestine, trinkets from Jerusalem or Jaffa—one or other of the strange



collection of things that a soldier picks up on his travels.

They were amongst us some twenty-four hours, and then the message came that they should proceed. And with its coming dawned the knowledge that their idea that they were going home had been an empty delusion—they were hurrying into the heart of the storm. They bore the news bravely, like the good soldiers they were, though disappointment was written on their faces.

So they were hurried to the front. They were going home!—and to the credit of the authorities it should be said that, as soon as the terrible pressure was over and it was possible to send men on leave, these men who had thus been summoned from far-distant quarters of the far-flung battle-line received priority in the matter of furlough. But some of them were not spared to see the sunlight paint again the purple hills of Peeblesshire, or hear the murmur of Gala Water as it ripples over the stones, or watch the silent Nith wind darkly past the tower of Lincluden. They were going home—and some of them sleep in that little home in the bosom of mother earth to which at long last we all come.

His home has always occupied a warm corner in the heart of the Briton, and the war, with the inevitable separation which it brought in its train, served only to deepen his affection. It intensified it by contrast. Every soldier at the front was homeless. There was no permanence about his dwelling-place: there was but little comfort, and



nothing to fasten itself about his heart. But seen through the distance every brick and board of his cottage in the homeland is beautiful.

Memory gathered tendrils from every corner, which entwine themselves into his affections and will not be torn down. And, since it is to woman that we owe the home, it is a presence within those walls which makes the difference. Home is home, because the woman he loves is there, be she mother or wife. Home is home because of the clatter of children's feet and the prattle of children's voices. Home is no mere aggregation of stone and mortar, but the holy ground of a thousand tender intimacies ; of hallowed emotions ; of humanities made noble by sacrifice and love. The humblest home where love reigns is an outer court of the kingdom of heaven. And from his sordid trench, his rat-infested dug-out, or his billet in a barn, the soldier turned glowing and hungry thoughts to his own little corner of Paradise.

Are all the homes of Britain worthy of the men who kept *our* homes inviolate ? I doubt it. In many of our cities and in many of our country districts the only habitations which some men can afford to live in are unfit for dog-kennels. Yes ! there is no place like home : and even in the heart of Africa there are no places like some of the homes in which Imperial Britain has sought to rear an Imperial race.

We shall be guilty of base treason to the memory of the dead, and of baser betrayal of the heroic living, if we do not make it a duty to see that in



every home in our land the children have a chance of growing up clean and straight and strong—the worthy heirs of that great heritage which their fathers bled and died to secure.



## XVII

### THE DECAY OF RELIGION

#### I—THE CHURCHES

FOR years before the war it was obvious to any one who took an interest, however casual, in the matter, that there was something radically wrong with the religious life of the nation. Statistics showed that church attendance had declined, and that the number of children attending Sunday schools had either decreased or had not grown *pari passu* with the population. And there were other signs, less obvious but equally real, which indicated that religion had lost much of its grip on the national life. These facts had given pause to many who hold, and rightly, that where no vision is the people perish ; and the war brought the matter right into the forefront of urgent questions. There were some who imagined that when peace was established we should straightway emerge into a new world in which all men would assiduously practise the cardinal virtues, and in which there would be no room for any of the seven deadly sins. Unless this world cataclysm was the Battle of Armageddon, and we are on the eve of the millennium, such imaginings are sublimed foolishness, for the war has



done nothing to increase the morality of the people.

As a physician I feel a certain diffidence in writing on the question of the decay of religion, for I have no right or title to be regarded in any sense as an expert. But my training enables me to recognize disease when I see it, and to apportion their proper value to various symptoms, and I imagine, perhaps wrongly, that I can diagnose some of the causes underlying the morbid decline that affects our religious life.

The disease is not restricted to one organization, or body of persons. It affects the Churches, the clergy and ministers, and the people. I propose to describe the symptoms as they present themselves to me in each case. Let us begin with the Churches.

The original conception of the Church as the whole body of those who profess the Christian faith has been greatly modified by the interference of man. The devout Catholic, while acknowledging with his lips allegiance to this conception, is constantly making a mental reservation. Only those belong to the Church who see eye to eye with him in matters of ecclesiastical order and church discipline. So division has arisen, with all the varieties of denominationalism, and one body of Christian people glares at another over an imaginary but none the less mutually exclusive fence, and the cause of religion is allowed to suffer because the various denominations place infinitely more stress upon the petty, man-imagined and man-made



differences they have created than upon the common points in belief which ought to be their rallying ground. The cause of religion is not going to recover from the canker that at present is gnawing at its heart till the Churches make a serious and comprehensive attempt to sink their differences, even at the sacrifice of what some of them may regard as rightful privileges, and get together to work for the end at which they all profess to be aiming—although to the man in the street they frequently seem to be aiming at each other. Religion is too big a thing and too vital a thing, and altogether too necessary for the health of the nation, to be allowed to suffer because of non-essentials. It is the lack of unity among the Churches that has been one of the most compelling causes in alienating from them the full support of the nation's manhood.

It came to me as a surprise to be assured by quite a broad-minded clergyman that the chief obstacle in the way of a closer *rapprochement* between the divided denominations was the will of the laity. To this I venture to oppose a whole-hearted denial. In these matters the laity most often believe what the ordained ministers of religion have taught them and insisted upon, and if representative men from all denominations were to band themselves together to preach unity and to pursue it earnestly they would rally to their side all the best minds of the country. Of recent years sundry spasmodic, half-hearted, and somewhat camouflaging demonstrations of a desire for



closer fellowship have been indulged in. There have, for instance, been international and interdenominational conferences on such topics as Foreign Missions—and the thoughtful layman, who had grown sick and weary of all divisions, has felt a glad hope rise within him. On the common platform there has been much talk, the purport of which was the old avowal, "*Unum corpus in Christo sumus*"; but the expectant layman has had his pleasant hopes dashed to the ground when, a few days later, he has discovered the Episcopalian still refusing to recognize the Presbyterian order, the Presbyterian, for his part, declining to acknowledge any special priestly gift proceeding from episcopal ordination, and both joining in common to hold that the Baptist is ill-advised in withholding the sacramental initiation of baptism until an adult makes for himself profession of his faith in Christ.

In the life of a camp we had a daily proof of the absurdity and illogical nature of this lack of unity. The padres of the various denominations fraternized with each other in the mess, lived in perfect harmony one with another, became apparently close and loyal friends, and were inseparable companions on every day of the week but one. When Sunday comes the canker of disunion manifested itself. Each went to his own tent to offer worship to the same God, after a somewhat different fashion. The day of all days on which the closest spiritual unity ought to have been apparent was the only day in the week when the



one shut himself off from the other ; and this separation from each other was only in the act of approaching their common Father. It was pathetic ; and to the thinking soldier inexplicable. Surely God must have laughed ; perhaps He wept.

Any two denominations will join readily enough and heartily enough to suspect and condemn anything peculiar to a third denomination. What they will not so readily do is combine to sink their differences and throw themselves wholeheartedly against the common foe. But divisions and misunderstandings are not confined to differing denominations. Possibly they exhibit their saddest qualities when they exist between two bodies in the same Church. Of this we have a striking example in the case of the Church of England. Her fold is big enough to include several schools of belief—though all subscribe to the same Articles. But within her walls are two markedly opposite bodies : the Evangelical, or Low Church, and the so-called High Church party. Between these two there is distrust, suspicion, and mutual rancour. The High Church party stretches vain hands towards the Roman and the Eastern Catholic Church, with which it feels a closer spiritual affinity than with its Low Church brethren. On the other side, the Low Church party is in greater spiritual concord with some of the Nonconformist bodies than with the extreme section within the Establishment.

All these divisions cannot do otherwise than



exert a prejudicial effect on the lay mind, which for the greater part does not care to occupy itself with fine gradations or petty divergences in ecclesiastical order. The man in the street sees the differences : he takes an unholy delight in the wordy polemics in which one section of the Church engages with another ; but—and here is the tragedy—he comes to the conclusion that the loyalty of the Churches to the common cause of advancing Christ's Kingdom upon the earth is, even in the eyes of their adherents, a little thing compared with the maintenance of some petty privilege or the assiduous culture of some medieval shibboleth. He doubts the Churches, so he will have none of them.

Among our soldiers this attitude of mind was common. As soldiers they knew that the enemy could only be defeated by loyal and constant co-operation between all the battalions and regiments engaged. They would have thought it the highest treason to the cause they had at heart were a battalion, say of Southern Irishmen, to refuse to combine with a battalion of Scottish Highlanders in order to attack and win some difficult position held by the foe, because the Highlanders had ceased to nurse an age-long grudge against Cromwell, or because they wore kilts, or because they received a larger measure of newspaper publicity than some other regiments. No !—when real work against evil has to be done, all petty differences must be sunk.

It may be suggested that this comparison is a



ridiculous one. These imagined differences in historical animosities, or regimental uniform, or publicity are not to be compared for one moment with the matters at issue which divide the various bodies of the Church. On that one may have one's own opinion—and the opinion of the man in the street, is that the one set of differences is as of great or of as little importance as the other. And when he sees half the energies of the Christian Churches diverted from the fight which they proclaim to be their *raison d'être* and frittered away in petty bickerings and pitiful misunderstandings he comes to the conclusion that there is a hollowness, a lack of genuineness, about the Churches' devotion to the cause they profess, and, being an honest man, he begins to doubt them, and doubt begets mistrust, which ultimately develops into apathy. These divisions between the Churches were among the chief factors in bringing about their loss of grip on the national life before the war. War has taught men the supreme value of unity, given them a deeper sense of reality, and shown them the necessity of whole-hearted combination against the foe. They expect the Churches to show a practical appreciation of these facts, or they shrug their shoulders and pass by on the other side. For years there has been talk of union among the Churches—but it has, except in one striking Scottish example, trickled away into thin air. To a layman the union of the Protestant bodies, or, if the word offends, the Churches which profess the faith of the Reformed



Catholic Church in Great Britain, does not seem an impossibility. The trouble, according to the man in the street, is that the higher ecclesiastical authorities have never made a serious and whole-hearted endeavour to secure it. To bring it about there would require to be a policy of give and take. The union would have to be something tangible and practical, something more than an invisible unity of the spirit which many of the Churches already claim. From this union the Roman Catholic Church will hold aloof—staying herself upon her age-long conviction of infallibility and unchangeableness; but she might be prepared to admit her spiritual affinity even with bodies of Christians who dissent from her outward forms.

To secure agreement, there should be freedom to as large an extent as is compatible with the presentation of a firmly welded common front to the foe. And the Churches would require to recognize, what some of them are very slow to do, that, though truth itself is eternal, man's knowledge of it in any one age, or his presentation of it in the words of any one age, can never be final. In the past religion has suffered because some of the Churches have been unable or unwilling to discriminate between the essentials of their faith and the method in which these principles found concrete expression in creeds or other articles of belief. This lack of elasticity and subservience to the chilling influence of the dead have alienated many reverent minds from all allegiance to the Churches.



Let the Churches combine to recognize and declare that they stand for and on the revelation of God to man in the Person of Jesus Christ, and the work of redemption wrought by Him. In the light of that great proclamation all the unessential accretions which have attached themselves like barnacles to the divided Churches would fall from them.

One tends to become despondent when one recalls how very little the Churches have done in the past for the mass of the people. In all ages efforts after social progress have had to fight with opposition from the Churches not infrequently, and, what is worse, an unheeding apathy. No great social reform that I can remember has ever been initiated by the Churches, either singly or collectively. And one does not readily forget that more than one of the Churches opposed the abolition of slavery. Some ten years ago an enterprising political publicist compiled a record of the voting of the Bishops in the House of Lords during the preceding hundred years. It was a depressing record—on which I do not wish to dwell; but, like all pamphlets of the kind, it had an immense circulation, and helped only to nurture a distrust of the Churches already all too common in the public mind. It may be urged, and rightly, that it is unfair to saddle the present-day representatives of the Church in the Upper Chamber with the burden of their predecessors' errors in judgment: and it must be admitted that of recent years the Bishops have voted consist-



ently in favour of Temperance Reform, and have shown themselves alive to the need of social reforms in many directions. But the man in the street has not been helped towards allegiance to the Churches by that century-long record, which makes him doubt the validity of the Apostolic Succession. He has drifted into an attitude of mind—illogical, no doubt, but none the less real—which makes him attach more importance to the defects either of the episcopate or any other form of church government, than to its good qualities; and unfortunately he is all too prone to confuse religion with the exponents of it. He wants the Church to help him not only to live in Heaven, but to live decently on earth; and its neglect to take any concerted action to effect this has made him distrust it more and more. He concludes that there is something radically wrong with the Churches when he finds that some of their chief supporters, men set in places of honour, such as wardens, or elders, or deacons, are sometimes men whose public life does not exactly square with their profession. Unfortunately we all tend to judge a flock by its black sheep. We see the worst, and, seeing them, become blind to the best.

This habit of mind, which was already firmly established, has only been strengthened in the man in the street by his experiences of military service. Every regiment has its own pride, and its own standard of conduct. If, by some mischance, a dirty and slovenly soldier is discovered



in any battalion, his comrades never rest until they have taught him, not always by the gentlest methods, that he is a disgrace to them, and that they will have none of him until he learns to mend his ways. And by much precept, and daily example, they steadily set themselves to make a man of him, so that he ultimately becomes as tidy, clean, and smart as the best of them. But when he remembers what is an all-too-common feature of church life, and how the "bad soldier"—the sweater, the property-monger, or the profiteer—is promoted to the rank of a non-commissioned officer because he is a "good soldier" on one day of the week, he concludes that the Churches are nothing more than a glorified fraud, and religion, as practised by some of its professors, a mean and self-seeking pretence. If the Churches are honest, men cannot understand why this should be; or, if religion is the real thing they are told it is, how one who makes public profession of it can be guilty of such abominable duplicity.

## II—THE CLERGY

I have had many intimate friends among the padres of all denominations. As a rule, they have shown themselves to be a fine body of men: ready to endure hardness, to put up with discomfort and privation cheerily, and to expose themselves fearlessly to danger. Occasionally I have come across one whose *métier* was obviously not the calling in which he found himself; but the same might be said of many doctors. Prac-



tically every one of them has complained of the difficulty of getting into close personal relations with the men. They have discovered that many of the men avoid them with a certain timid apprehension; others are prepared to welcome them so long as they will talk of cricket or football or concert-parties, but show an obvious disquietude if they endeavour to turn the conversation into more serious channels; others, even when very sick, display an open antagonism, and tell them frankly that they do not wish to be bothered. A few, with anxious minds, or firm religious beliefs, welcome them invariably and are ready to seek their counsel or help. But, for the greater part, the attitude of the soldier towards the padre is one of good-natured but disinterested tolerance. To some men is given the grace of a magnetic personality, and any padre endowed with that rare gift is to be congratulated. He can usually get at the men. But for most chaplains the road to the men's hearts is stony and difficult, and some of them cannot travel it. Most padres with whom I have talked have confessed to a frank disappointment at the lack of interest evinced by the men in "the things that matter." To some this has been a cause of considerable distress, and one fine soul assured me that he had found it so difficult to get on terms of spiritual understanding with the men that he thought of resigning his chaplain's appointment and enlisting as a private in the R.A.M.C. He imagined, and rightly, that if he had shown himself assiduous



in humble service upon some wounded man, he would have succeeded in getting very close to his heart, and would have an opportunity for the word in season.

As a layman, I have had opportunities which are denied to the padres, of discovering the reason of the soldiers' attitude towards them, and I find that it is no new habit of mind which they donned with their uniform, but something which they already possessed in civil life, and which is so deeply ingrained in their constitutions as almost to be an instinct. Some of their distrust is founded on complete misconceptions; some of it is, unfortunately, all too well grounded.

Let us examine a few of these misconceptions. It is believed widely, even by those who ought to know better, that the clergyman's "job" is what the soldier calls a "cushy" one. According to the critics he works one day a week, and pockets a fat stipend for doing so. Having had the inestimable benefit of being brought up in a Scottish manse, it gives me supreme pleasure to nail that lie to the counter. There are lazy ministers, but there are equally lazy clerks, working men, and doctors. A large majority of ministers work extremely hard. They have no eight hours day, and in parochial work, public work of various kinds, and study—which they must continue all their lives if they do not desire to drift into intellectual backwaters—they accomplish an amount of work which would compare very favourably with that of any manual labourer or artisan in



the country. Some of them break down, or become prematurely aged through overwork. But the popular idea is that a clergyman plays golf on Monday, attends tea-parties every afternoon of the week, visits an occasional sick person, officiates at a funeral or a wedding, and on Sunday scrapes together a few thoughts on his way to church, and launches them in his sermon at an unprotected people. This idea is an absolute travesty of the life of the average conscientious clergyman; but, unfortunately, it is one that is widely cherished.

As for his monetary reward,—let the manse of Scotland and the pretty vicarages of England shout their answer. There is no body of educated and intelligent men so poorly paid as ministers. A few in large cities or well-endowed country churches receive what may be called adequate stipends; a few, a very few, are handsomely remunerated; but a vast majority receive what is little more than a living wage, when one takes into account the many charges that must be met within its inelastic circumference. A clergyman is expected to keep up a certain position, to dress himself, his wife, and his children in accordance with that position, and to educate his children fittingly. That the clergy and ministers of England and Scotland do all these things—and send, as occasionally happens in Scotland, every son they have to the University—on a salary of sometimes less than £200 a year and rarely more than £300, is one of those economic miracles which



baffles explanation. It is only possible by the most careful self-denial on the part of parents and children, and, if for nothing else, every clergyman or minister and his wife ought to be held in high esteem.

But the popular misconception continues, and is one of the reasons why the soldier or civilian mistrusts the clergy.

Another reason why the soldier avoids the padre is that he imagines he professes religion simply because it is his job. I wonder if clergymen at home are watched with the same hawk-like eyes as the padres abroad. If so, it behoves them to walk very warily. A thousand critical eyes are upon them; and any petty meanness, any deviation from the absolutely straight path, anything in their conduct which the critic cannot make to square with their profession, damns them for ever in his eyes. He is ready to love a padre who is a "sport"; but the definition of "sport" which he would apply to a clergyman is a little more rigidly circumscribed than its connotation when he applies it to himself. For instance, he admires a padre who will play football, cricket, or cards; but he would have a supreme contempt for one who would attend a football match or cricket match on Sunday, even though—and this is a curiously illogical position—his critic may himself be one of the players. He is ready to give his whole-hearted respect to a padre who can on occasion utter a vigorous and comprehensive "Damn" when, in the critic's opinion, the cir-



cumstances deserve such an expletive. But I should not advise even the youngest padre to try to gather a congregation by wandering round the camp like a blue streak of profanity. When, how, and where a padre may use winged and wicked words is very strictly defined in the soldier's unwritten code. He is sufficiently keen to detect at once the "swear word" uttered to curry favour, rather than as the expression of a sorely tried human spirit; and he is not to be snared into approval by such unprincipled "eye-wash."

But the soldier will never forgive a padre for any little dereliction of ordinary duties. If they would win the people, the clergy must rid themselves of all shadow of suspicion that their religion is purely a professional pose.

Then another reason for the mistrust of the padre by the men or of the clergyman by the people is that, rightly or wrongly, they imagine him to be a man given to dogmatize even in spheres of thought in which he has no right or title to give an *ex cathedra* opinion. Perhaps his training tends to make him opinionative—perhaps he finds it difficult to dissociate himself from his pulpit manner. Over and over again I have heard soldiers say: "I've no time for padres. They're always wanting to cram things down your throat. They won't listen to your arguments, and if you corner them they hit you on the head with a text; and that's no argument." Here we find ourselves face to face with a situation which is, I believe, to a large extent responsible for the loss



of grip of the clergy upon the young men. If clergymen were gifted with any knowledge of psychology they would know that youth is the time of questionings. Strange aspirations, peculiar and subtle doubts arise spontaneously in the minds of young men, or are planted there and fomented by books that are definitely anti-religious. The young mind is easily poisoned by sophisms; and the intellectual pride of youth may tempt some embryo Voltaire to give defiant expression of his ill-digested views to some clergyman or other. If a clergyman knew, and knew thoroughly, the grounds of his own beliefs; if he had himself hammered every rivet into his own armour; if he were sure, from personal experience, of the truth of all those things he so glibly proclaims; if his faith were not only of the spirit but something to which his intellect gave its firm assent, he would know how to deal wisely with such an inquirer. But all too often his faith is a matter of book-lore; he has not at his finger-ends the essential answers to the barbed inquiries of his questioner; he feels himself cornered, and he thinks to defeat his attacker by falling back on a text. And that, as the soldier says, "is no argument."

What is wanted among our clergymen of all denominations is more intellectual honesty and less intellectual slackness. I have had many friendly conversations with ministers of widely divergent schools of belief, and I have been interested, and sometimes not a little astonished, to



discover that some of them had nothing but the shakiest grounds for the beliefs which, week after week, they proclaimed. And that, not because more positive proofs than any they possessed were not accessible. They were more or less content to base their opinions on the pious assertions of other people—on “the teaching of the Church,” or *The Westminster Confession*, or in the last resort upon some isolated text.

Now, a condition of mind like this is not going to be understood or appreciated in an age when every person has had an education, when literature of all kinds is cheap, and when a ferment of doubt is abroad in the minds of the people.

An intelligent N.C.O. tells me that in the circle of his soldier friends there are constant and animated discussions on basic problems of religious belief, and that the keenest debaters are found among the men who never go near a church or a church parade if they can help it. A list of the topics that have been passed under review shows that the men are keenly interested in religion, but—and this is the sadness of it—they prefer to fight their own way to faith or unfaith rather than lay one of their difficulties before the official representatives of religious teaching. They have discussed such matters as “Is there a God?” “Was Christ the Son of God?” “Is there a soul?” “Is God omnipotent?” “Did Christ die for men?” “Is there any proof of immortality?” “Is there such a place as hell?”

Sometimes these conversations or discussions



have begun as little informal chats between two friends, seeking to help each other; sometimes an adjacent listener has interpolated an opinion, until the discussion has become more or less general. Sometimes the discussions have become heated, intellectual affrays. Men will rather fight their own battle with these momentous questions than come to the clergy for advice and help. They have ceased to come, because experience in the past has told them that when they ask for bread they will be given a stone: when they ask for a reason they will be given a dogma. And it is largely because of this that our young men before the war, and our men of to-day, have no time for the Churches. The Churches will not meet them on the grounds of their doubts; and the clergy have allowed themselves to become intellectually slothful.

What the young man wants to know is, where does intellectual and demonstrable proof of the mysteries of religion end, and where must faith begin? I am firmly convinced that if some clergyman would have the courage to speak out boldly, and, placing himself in the position of these young men, try to work out reasonably and logically a series of answers to these and other similar questions, and state clearly at what point Reason must steady his footstep by laying a hand upon the shoulder of Faith, he would find his church packed by a crowd of hungry young men. At heart the men of the day have strong religious instincts: they want to know; they would gladly worship;



but through lack of vision the Churches have failed to hold them. When they do stray, half-shamefacedly, into a pew, they hear what? A little pleasant music; a few prayers, the need for which they do not admit, as they are in doubt as to the existence or accessibility of God; and a short essay, made up of elementary platitudes of moral counsel. All too often the Churches are the betrayers of a great trust, and the ministers the visionless interpreters of the grandest message that was ever entrusted to human ambassadors.

During the past twenty-five years infinite harm has been done to religion by the adoption of some of the opinions of the German rationalist theologians. They began with criticisms, many of which were no doubt perfectly valid, of the Old Testament; but, with Teutonic thoroughness and vandalism, they did not stop there, and have even dared to lay impious hands upon the Divine Founder of Christianity. The rationalism of the theological schools of Germany was responsible, equally with the imperial ambitions of the Hohenzollerns, for the world-war, and that rationalism steadily permeated the theological literature of England and Scotland, and was preached from many of our pulpits. Is it too much to say that Christ has been badly served by some of His ministers?

The rationalism of Germany, propounded in her theological seminaries and preached from her pulpits, has brought moral ruin upon her; and



some part of the decay of religion in our own country has been due to the hasty adoption by some of our own theologians and their students of these pernicious and poisonous views.

A rationalistic system either of philosophy or theology does not promote moral progress ; and it is interesting to note that France is to some extent being cleansed of rationalism, both in her philosophy and her literature.

The Churches have lost hold on the people because they have failed to make the fullest use of their opportunities. Their opportunities have been very great ; their neglect of them has been so extraordinary that one can hardly believe it has been altogether accidental.

To address a congregation is a matter of tremendous responsibility. Some within it may be there simply from habit ; others may be there in the definite quest for help or spiritual solace. Do they always get it ? Do they even get it often ? If I may for a moment be permitted to recount my personal experience, I may say that, carrying into youth and manhood the habits of church-going inculcated in childhood, I have been a regular church-goer all my life. Though a Presbyterian, I am sufficiently catholic to have heard many of the most famous preachers of all denominations ; and, of all the torrents of pulpit oratory that have surged into my ears, I cannot now recall more than half a dozen sermons—and some of them were preached by men unheard of beyond their own pulpit. The fault may be



mine; but my experience is by no means an isolated one.

In France some of the padres obviously made a strenuous endeavour to preach sermons that would help the men. But, as a rule, their utterances were more of the cheerful "Quit you like men, be strong" type than of a kind to satisfy any inquiring soul quagmired in doubt. Sometimes one came across a padre who had apparently altogether missed his mark. He arrived in France with a hundred of his old sermons wrapped up in a paper parcel in his valise. Men like that should be court-martialled by order of the Chaplain-General, and sentenced to death, "or other lesser penalty." They should never have been allowed to come out. In their choice of subjects they sometimes showed an extraordinary lack of imagination. I have heard sermons on strange topics, but the most inappropriate to address to a parade was one on Sunday observance.

And I have also witnessed what was little less than a spiritual tragedy. An eminent ecclesiastic made a special visit to our corner of the zone of war, and the padres did all in their power to beat up a huge congregation for him. They persuaded several medical officers who had attended no service for years to join, and there was a full muster of patients, orderlies, nursing staff, and officers from our own and adjacent units. We met in a beautiful natural cathedral, between the aisles of immemorial trees. For us it was a very special occasion; for the preacher it was a great oppor-



tunity, and he ought to have seen that and used it. His sermon, which was the only part of the service which he performed, was a tragic disappointment. It contained neither nourishment for the mind, nor healthful waters for the soul. It opened with a few conventional platitudes expressing his pleasure at being with us ; a reference or two to the war and the progress of events, a childish story from the front, pointless and without any emotional appeal, and he ended after some twenty minutes of uninteresting, unedifying, and uninspired chatter. Only in the concluding sentences did he make the slightest reference to our Lord. And those who had been persuaded to come went away chagrined and disappointed. They came expecting precious gold : they found nothing but sand. It was an opportunity lost. In summing it up a medical officer, not unsympathetic towards religion, ventured on a pithy comparison. He said : “ If I called in an eminent consultant to see a patient suffering from a very serious malady of an obscure nature I should not consider that he had done his duty either by the patient or by me if all he could suggest was that I should stick a corn-plaster on the patient’s head.”

Yet, when the worst has been said, it must be admitted that, as a body, the padres are fine men. They have shown themselves to be, a thousand times and more, in mess, in dug-out, and in the trenches. And those of them who have succeeded in getting into close and personal touch with the men have done a world of work in breaking through



the barriers of distrust. The men in France learnt that, after all, a clergyman might still be a human being, with similar interests, similar affections, and similar temptations as themselves. And as they have seen that, they have taken the first step towards a completer understanding. Let us trust that the understanding will become more firmly cemented, and that the fact that they have borne privation, hardship, peril, and fatigue together will be remembered as a bond of union between padres and people.

### III—THE PEOPLE

It would be most unfair to fasten all the responsibility for the religious decay of the nation either upon the Churches or the clergy. They have their faults, some of which I have already indicated ; but the people themselves are largely responsible for the condition of spiritual lethargy into which they have drifted. It is very doubtful whether great commercial prosperity is good in the highest sense for any country. It may lead to a lowering of standards and to the pursuit of false ideals. Great prosperity and richness of spiritual vision do not often succeed in existing together. The worship of the golden calf is incompatible with the worship of the Highest.

For thirty or forty years before the war Britain had been laying up treasure for herself upon the earth, and forgetting to put any of her treasure in the safe deposit of Heaven. So it had come to pass that the religious habit of mind was culti-



vated only by a few. The church-going habits of the mid-Victorian era were sloughed off like a withered skin, and what had been regarded in the 'sixties as a privilege began to be considered as little more than an irksome concession to good breeding. The habit of church attendance declined; to some extent it became a matter of social expediency rather than an expression of conviction; and with the decline in church-going came a decline in the religious life of the home. The sanctity of the Day of Rest was invaded, and the opportunities for other occupations than that of worship upon that day multiplied apace. Then, with the spread of education, another disturbing factor was introduced. Men began to read books of so-called popular science. In them they frequently discovered things which tended to shake their beliefs in old faiths; and, as man is ever a doubter, for without that faculty he would never have made much progress, he began to be uncertain as to the eternal verities. He came to imagine that there was some direct conflict between science and religion. He failed to see that each of them is a different facet in the diamond of truth, and that, being so, they can never be hostile to each other, though our incomplete view of them may make them appear to be so. Before his eyes in the world of material things he had daily evidence of the truth and power of science. Was it not the applications of science which were filling his coffers to overflowing? There was something real in that, while religion—well, that



was superstition sublimated by civilization, and scientifically unsound ! So he ceased to lay the stress upon it that his fathers had done ; but, with that innate tendency to adhere to old customs which is part and parcel of our national character, he still preserved the outward appearance of old habits. He still attended church : it was good form, and the Church was a national institution ! He still brought his children to be christened : there was really nothing in it, but the women-folk regarded it as the proper thing to do ! He would not hear of his daughter being married in a registry office,—though, of course, marriage was a purely civil contract. There was a kind of conservative decency about a marriage in church, and he felt a pride in walking up the aisle with the prospective bride on his arm. Then, he would not like to be buried exactly like a dog, and the burial service was beautiful and consoling. He would like it read over his frail dust. But, beyond that, religious observances were to him an empty show, and religion—the acknowledgment of God, and the devotion to an ideal set before him in the revelation of God to man—had ceased to be a dynamic force in his life.

With the next generation the religious apathy became more marked. There was still no outward and declared antagonism of a violent kind ; but there was less observance of outward forms, and less conformity to the minimum code of well-mannered morality that passed for religion in his set—though many devout souls still clung fondly



to the old and cherished beliefs, and put into practice the ethics of their rich faith. Now, as belief or unbelief rapidly spreads from one stratum of society to another, it was natural that the mode of thought adopted by the wealthy and successful business man should rapidly percolate downwards through the social scale. His assistants, clerks, and employees began to be tinctured with the same tepid current of unfaith, and, as often happens in like case, they carried the matter further and gradually dropped into a condition of almost complete religious apathy.

Side by side with the decay of religious observance in the way of church attendance there grew up a neglect of religion in the home. It is safe to say that in the mid-Victorian era, in at least half of the homes of the aristocracy, and the upper and lower middle classes the habit of family prayers was punctiliously observed. I should be surprised to learn that, even in Scotland, where this excellent tradition has died hard, the custom is still observed in 4 per cent. of the homes. And it is to the decay of family religion thus manifested that, more than to any other cause, the religious decadence of the present day may be directly traced.

Many parents, whose own attachment to religion is of the slightest, are scrupulous to see that their children attend Church ; but any religious habits that are thereby in process of formation are apt to be brought to naught by the negative character of the religion in the home.



And, all too often, this insistence upon church attendance by the children is largely a matter of social expediency. Behind it there is no conviction that religion is a necessary part of man's life if that life is to be lived at its best.

Then I do not think the people give the clergy or ministers fair play. The male portion of the household takes care to be out on important business when the clergyman is expected to call. This is a kind of moral shyness which amounts almost to moral cowardice. He is left to talk to the women-folk, and to the children, and as a rule so much camouflage has been prepared in anticipation of his visit that, unless he is a very shrewd man, he never sees things as they really are. I have sometimes thought what a genuine pleasure it would be for the King or Queen to see one of their cities as it really is. That pleasure is almost invariably denied them, for if they make an official visit every street and building is disguised out of recognition by Venetian poles, and tawdry festoons of paper flowers: so that even the most beautiful buildings are robbed of their natural stateliness. In our homes the clergyman has much the same experience. He has little chance of seeing the really noble aspirations that sometimes dwell in the hearts of the people. They are festooned, like the buildings, with the paper roses of cant; and the poor clergyman, who often has a keen nose for cant, leaves the house not a little disappointed.

I know more than one officer who has developed



a new confidence in the clergy through having been compelled to associate with one or more of them in the intimacies of the mess. He had discovered, what he never realized before, that a clergyman may still be a man, and a very fine man too. Before, he relegated all clergymen to a third and neutral sex. And it may come to pass that one of the good results of the war will be the establishment of a better feeling and a better understanding between the educated men of the community and the clergy.

To get to know them is to cease to suspect them. As a rule, the worst possible motive is put upon a clergyman's every action. If he takes a prominent part in public life it is because he loves the limelight and has fish of his own to fry. If he holds aloof from public life and devotes himself to his spiritual work entirely he is an effeminate creature—not to mix with men. Men pride themselves on their sportsmanship; but they rarely treat clergymen in a sportsmanlike fashion. If the situation is to be saved the laity must meet the clergy half-way. We must look beyond their professional avocation, and try to discover what manner of men they really are: and if we will only do so we shall find that, underneath all their clerical garb, and behind all their professionalism, they are at heart very fine men—ininitely better than most of their critics.

We may be irritated by an occasional assumption of superiority; we may dislike sundry clerical excrescences; but we are ourselves largely re-



sponsible for these defects in their characters by refusing to admit them, on equal terms with other men, to the intimacy of friendship.

The theological student suffers from the narrowness of his training. His training gives him considerable book-lore, but little practical knowledge of men—of men's lives, habits, and temptations. Every medical student receives the most valuable part of his training in hospital wards, or in dispensaries from which he visits the poor. By the time he qualifies he has acquired not only some knowledge of medicine, but a considerable understanding of human nature and human life. And in his vocation the latter is often of as much value as the former. This valuable experience is denied to the candidate for holy orders. He may do sporadic slumming, or be attached for a time to a Mission Church in a poor parish; but he is ever suspect of the people. He never gets so close to them as the medical student. To get such knowledge he would have to go about among them not as an accredited member of some religious community, but as a nominally free-lance philanthropist.

The grip that the Salvation Army has upon the lower classes is largely due to the fact that its officers have a very shrewd and practical knowledge of the lives of the poor; and, if our clergy could only acquire this knowledge not only would their power for good be enormously increased, but, through mixing with men, and getting a basic understanding of some of the huge problems of



humanity, they would lose those angles and corners of character which so often repel.

We have not been fair to the clergy. They may have tended to make of themselves a special class. We have aided and confirmed the tendency by our attitude towards them.

Sympathy and understanding tend to bring the best that is in a man to the surface. If the people showed more sympathy towards the clergy in their work, and sought to appreciate and ameliorate their difficulties, it would all make for the progress of true religion.

I have already said that one of the reasons for the comparative failure of the Churches is the fact that most clergymen fail to meet the difficulties of their congregations in their sermons. But for this all the blame cannot fairly be apportioned to them. A doctor expects a patient to be able to give a more or less coherent account of his symptoms. Without the patient's contribution the clinical picture is apt to be incomplete, and the diagnosis and line of treatment suggested may consequently err. There would be a greater chance of our ministers giving us the spiritual help we required if we laid bare to them the symptoms of our need. But if we leave them to discover these by unaided intuition alone, and avoid them, so that they never have a proper opportunity of examining us, we are expecting them to perform a miracle.

Fortunately there are in the community many people of all classes to whom their religion is a



very precious thing. Firm-rooted in the faith, they worship God in somewhat differing methods, and according to different outward forms. They are the salt of the earth. The pity is there are so few of them. And there is also a very large body of people who manifest some allegiance, though it be only tepid, to the things of Christ. They probably constitute the bulk of the community, and it is among them that, by the quickening influence of the Spirit, the greatest number of reinforcements for the Army of Christ are to be found.

Besides these two classes there is a third—with no outward interest in religion—who neither seem to desire it nor care for it, and who in some instances are openly opposed to it. These, if wisely dealt with, need not ever be a serious danger to the cause of religion. Many of them practise a fine form of religion, and live straight, clean, and honourable lives without any profession of special belief. They are reverent agnostics. The greatest danger to the common weal of the faith are the lukewarm supporters of it.

If we are to reap from the awful years of purging catastrophe any real and enduring benefit it must be in the spiritual realm rather than in the material. Materially we are impoverished ; spiritually, if we would learn aright, we may be enriched. But we shall not win this reward unless we set ourselves earnestly to cultivate religion with more assiduity—loyal, continuous, and comprehensive—between churches, clergy, and people.



In the past each has been to blame. In the future let each earn its title to a meed of praise. To win much, each must be prepared to lose a little. To secure a victory each must fight and strive. As the children of our Empire, we are the inheritors of great possessions. What a great people we should become if our religious aspirations were as genuine as our imperial ambitions !

We look to the Churches and to the clergy to aid in ushering in a renaissance of religious life in our land ; but we must not forget that, though the Churches and the clergy may create the atmosphere, and give guidance to the people, the fundamental change must take place first in the individual heart.



## XVIII

### LOOT

SOME there be who hold that the British Empire was built up by pillage and piracy. There is just enough truth in this belief to make it bite. But, setting aside the history of our territorial possessions, on which, as we are frequently reminded, the sun never sets we must admit that the language we speak has been enriched by the plunder we have stolen from other tongues.

We need have only a superficial knowledge of etymology to recognize how composite our daily vocabulary is. Latin and Greek, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Danish, Anglo-Saxon, and Gaelic have all had tribute levied upon them, as well as the languages of those countries and peoples we have taken under our imperial wing. The result is the particularly rich glossary we are privileged to employ. We may not be able to express, by the use of a single word, those nuances of meaning which are so perfectly set forth in French; but the English language has qualities of richness which belong to no other tongue, and it has a receptive elasticity which enables it to take up and incorporate within its structure ever fresh trophies from the speech of other peoples.



Some of this verbal plunder, once incorporated, becomes disguised, and in process of time changes its meaning.

Take as an example, the word "knave." In its modern acceptation it conveys the idea of a person of evil character, but when we first filched it from the German tongue it meant a boy (*Knabe*), or the squire of a knight. That was, of course, in the days when there were knights in Germany. Or take the word "imp." Originally there was not even a shadow of the sinister about it. It meant simply a graft on a stem, and came to mean a son, and in St. Mary's Church at Warwick, if I remember rightly, there is a tomb where lies the dust of a "noble imp"—the child of the Earl of Leicester. Nowadays, when one applies the title to a small boy, one does so without the qualifying and dignified adjective, for an imp has come to wear a signification of naughtiness.

The war has added many words to our vocabulary. *Strafe*, *parados*, *Blighty*, and *camouflage* have succeeded in engrafting themselves upon our daily speech.

But there are other words and phrases as well. To "swing the lead" is the method used in the Senior Service to ascertain the depth of the sea. A soldier "swings the lead" when he wishes to test the profundity or shallowness of the medical officer's knowledge of human nature, in an endeavour to "wangle" or secure by artifice either a "Blighty ticket" or a longer residence "in dock"



—which means hospital. Hospital is a “cushier” or more comfortable billet than the trenches. If he fails in his efforts it is a “wash-out.”

To a medical officer an “eye-wash” means a lotion, the purpose of which is to restore the organ of sight to its normal state and render the vision clear. When Tommy speaks of “eye-wash” he means any form of artifice whereby he may make things appear better than they really are, and thereby blind his superiors to the true state of affairs.

Probably the largest accessions to our vernacular have come from our French allies. This is to be expected, for during the war many of our young men lived in France, and assimilated, after considerable mental indigestion, some knowledge of colloquial French.

Once before, the English language, or at least that part of it which we may call the Scottish tongue, was enriched by acquisitions from the French. Mary Queen of Scots left a considerable mark upon Scottish history; but the retinue of courtiers and attendants whom she brought with her, and the close and friendly understanding that in her day and for many years afterwards subsisted between Scotland and France left upon the Scottish tongue an indelible impression. Many so-called Scotch words are in reality the metamorphosed remnants of French originals.

When the poet sang—

“Gie bring tae me a pint o’ wine  
And fill it in a silver tassie”



he made use of a word for his goblet that had been left behind by Queen Mary's retainers. The Scotch "tassie" is the French *tasse*—a cup. Again, when the poet asks—

"What's a' the steer, kimmer?"

he makes use of a word for neighbour which is simply the Scottish version of the French *com-mère*.

Some of the words thus transferred in the sixteenth century from France to Scotland have dropped into desuetude and are quite forgotten; but a number still survive and are in daily use. In that hospitable northern land a *gigot* of mutton is served on an *ashet*—the word for the viand and its vehicle having been pillaged from France.

To this day village children still speak of a "gean" tree when referring to a wild cherry-tree. The word "gean" is the Scottish form of the French *guigne*—the spelling is altered, but the pronunciation remains the same.

Then "douce," as applied to a person, meaning sedate, is a direct theft from the French, and in the process has lost, perhaps, a little of its sweetness; while "gawkie" and "gauche" bear in their foreheads the imprint of their Gallic origin, and the black-coated "corbie," or crow, was hatched in the same nest as its brother *corbeau*.

A century ago it was no uncommon thing for the wayfarer along the Cowgate, Canongate, or High Street of Edinburgh to hear a cry of "Gardy loo" coming from some lofty window far above



his head ; and, if he did not precipitately seek cover, he ran the risk of being drenched from above by the contents of some goodwife's slop-pail. But it was not the good lady's fault—she was giving fair warning of the coming deluge by announcing to all and sundry “ *Gardez l'eau* ”—“ look out for water.” At a much later date, within the memory, I imagine, of the present generation, one might go into any baker's shop in the northern capital and ask for a dozen “ petticoat tails.” And, instead of receiving kickshaws of feminine underwear, one would obtain a dozen small cakes : the words *petits gâteaux* having become corrupted in process of time out of all orthographic resemblance to their French original. It seems far cry from the one to the other ; but repeated frequently, and with careless rapidity, one can understand how the parent words became thus transmogrified.

Some years ago I heard a Galloway shepherd make use of a French word which until that time I was unaware had engrafted itself upon the common speech. In speaking of holidays he said “ *vacance* ”—a direct and unchanged trophy of plunder from France. I do not know whether this word is of common use in Scotland ; but I do not imagine it can be, as I have heard it only once.

It was a tradition of the old Army that every British soldier was a born linguist. The tradition was not one of the schools, but of the barrack-square, and every Tommy was prepared at a



moment's notice to give a demonstration of his remarkable powers of engaging in a conversation in Afghan, Urdu, Hindustani, Chinese, Arabic, or Gold Coast palaver according to the nationality of the unfortunate victim who might first present himself. Like so many of the traditions of the old Army, this one has been guarded as a sacred thing by the men of the new Army. Of course, as the Army during the war was more representative of the nation than it had ever been, it included in its ranks many men with an erudite knowledge of foreign languages, acquired either by careful study or through travel and practice. But as soon as a man, whose education had been the minimum that would permit of his leaving school, donned the uniform of a soldier he imagined he acquired, by a special art of divine favour, the power to hold converse in their own tongue with any representative of what he pleased to regard as the subordinate races. Because of this, I have been the witness of elaborate conversations carried on between some khaki-clad board-school boy and natives in Fijian, Hindustani, and Chinese. The remarkable thing is that any orders he might give were carried out. This, I imagine, is a proof rather of the keen intelligence of the "subordinate" races than of Tommy's linguistic abilities; but Tommy thinks the boot is on the other leg.

I have been amused watching a sapper engaged in putting up telephone wires with the help of two Hindu soldiers from a labour battalion. The linguist, with climbing irons on his feet and a



broad leather strap round his waist, is perched near the top of the pole. One of his assistants is squatting, after the fashion of the contemplative East, on the ground a few yards from the base of the pole; the other is in charge of a coil of bright wire which he is leading from upright to upright. A stentorian voice from the pole-top wakens the dreamer from his reverie. He looks up, but says nothing. The Sahib wants something! He is shouting something that sounds suspiciously like English words that have been blown up by a shell, and sustained several fractures and dislocations. A purist would not recognize them as English, nor would a scholarly Hindu know them for words such as Gautama spoke. His sentence ends with "savvy." That is a word common, in Thomas's opinion, to all native tongues. The mild Hindu spreads half a dozen tools on the ground before him. There is another burst of Hindustani from the pole-top. The assistant places a finger on one of the tools and looks inquiringly up. The linguist ejaculates with some vigour a few pungent and curried words in the vernacular of the East; they sound like "No, you silly blighter"—but then, we must not forget that the same sounds are common to many languages—and, with menacing finger, points to the third tool from the left. The last words have obviously conveyed their meaning, for the Hindu picks up the chosen tool, rapidly slings it in a loop of string, and the linguist hauls it up to him, more proud than ever in his conviction that



he is a born scholar, who can talk idiomatic Hindustani with the greatest fluency.

But I think that Chinese, which most authorities regard as a hard language to master, is found the most easy to acquire by Mr. Atkins. He speaks it with considerable gesticulation, and so fluently that all one can hear sounds like a *mélange* of three phrases—"welly welly!" "muchee muchee," "chow chow"—and inevitably ends with the international word "savvy." And apparently John Chinaman "savvys," for he does what he is told; and the world-wide reputation of the British Army as the nursery of a polyglot soldiery is once more justified.

From the moment that the "contemptible little Army" set its foot in France, the British soldier knew that he was a brilliant French scholar, and his reputation, as well as his sense of self-satisfaction, have grown with the years. The following anecdote, already threadbare from much use, may be a pure invention, but it illustrates excellently the fashion in which Tommy persuaded himself that he is a master in conversational French.

To a Scotsman home on leave a friend remarked, "And how do you get on with the language?"

"Fine," replied the Scot. "It's an easy language yon. If ye want an egg ye juist say 'Ane oof.'"

"But suppose you want two," said his interlocutor. "What would you say then?"

"Well, I'd juist say, 'Twa oofs': and the



silly body would bring me three, and I'd gie her ane back."

O sweet tongue of Chateaubriand, Fénelon, Rousseau, Béranger and Loti, what desecrations may be wrought upon you by alien hands!

Soon after coming to France I personally came across a somewhat fine example of how our soldiers speak French. A "batman" wished to inform a newspaper woman that for the future she ought to bring ten copies of the local paper each morning instead of eight. This information he communicated to her quite distinctly by means of two words. I defy the most brilliant French scholar in Britain to do it as effectively in less than half a dozen.

He said "*Maintain encore*," and held up ten fingers. The woman nodded her head briskly, and thereafter brought the increased number regularly without fail. I took the trouble to analyse this cryptic French sentence, and, by filling in the mental processes of the soldier, I was able to see how he had managed to persuade himself that he was giving instructions that the "wayfaring man, though a fool," could make no mistake about. Obviously *maintain* was short for *maintenant* (Tommy does not care a button about correct terminations)—which, being interpreted, means "Now." That fixes the time factor, ever an all-important one. To Tommy "Encore" brings up visions of crowded, smoke-perfumed music-halls. "Encore," if shouted long and loudly enough, usually brought a performer back



again. It therefore must mean an occasion when some one returns to the same place. With this analysis in mind, let us look again at this fine flower of idiomatic French. "*Maintain encore*," being interpreted, means therefore, "Now, or henceforth, when you come back again"—and the ten extended fingers indicated the quantity of papers required. Yes, Tommy is a great linguist; but the French are an intelligent people.

It does not matter what he wants, the British soldier can make himself understood of the common people, and once a Briton is in khaki he seems to shed that insular self-consciousness and dread of making a fool of himself which is one of the chief reasons for the appalling deficiencies of our civil population in the knowledge of foreign tongues. And he takes a pride in the additions he makes to his vocabulary, and, as Keats did, who, when he came across any charming archaic word that took his fancy, chose an early opportunity to make use of it in one of his tuneful verses, he made the French words his own by using them as Attic salt to lend a flavour to his English conversation. It is in this way that the process of word-grafting is made effective.

As yet it is impossible to compile a complete glossary of the plundered words which have become a part of daily speech, it is difficult to say which will survive their transplantation into our alien speech. "*Napoo*" sounds rather like a character from a Gilbert and Sullivan opera: it



is the English rendering of *il n'y a plus*—and is used to express any gradation of lacking, from a temporary absence to complete annihilation.

At “lights out” an absentee is “*napoo*”: if he becomes a battle casualty and surrenders his identity disc he is permanently “*napoo*.” “*Toot sweet*” betokens extreme urgency. A message must be delivered “*toot sweet*” to the sergeant-major—who passes it on *tout-de-suite*, or at once, to the adjutant. And when he writes to his best girl at home Tommy sometimes tells her to answer “*toot sweet*.” Let us hope she takes the latter word as a term of endearment. Things that give him pleasure the soldier “linguist” calls *bong*, or, if he has been raised to the seventh heaven of delight, they become *tray bong*. If, on the other hand, anything has failed to come up to his anticipations it is *paw bong*, or, if he is a purist and desires to express nuances of pleasure or the reverse, it is *paw so bong*. *Bong swore* is a safe term with which to open a conversation with any likely young Frenchwoman he may meet of an evening, and *bong jour* is a morning salutation suitable in similar circumstances. Whether it be that the young Frenchwoman is a fluent speaker of English (which I doubt), or that Tommy is the linguist he imagines himself to be (of which proof is wanting), or because the language of a lad and a lass is the same the world over and can overstep all barriers of nationality or geography, the twain seem to have no difficulty in thoroughly understanding each other, with the



result that in more than one little village church behind the lines the bells have rung to celebrate the forging of another link in the *entente cordiale*.

When uncertain of the intelligence of the person to whom he is talking—he never doubts his own linguistic perfection—Tommy will interpolate a frequent *compree* into the easy flow of his speech. By that he wishes to inquire, with all politeness, whether his auditor understands. The word has much the same significance as the “savvy” with which he seeks to probe the abysmal depths of the Chinese or oriental intelligence. Another word that is frequently on his lips is *fini*. He rises from his meals with the word on his lips as though it were a post-prandial benediction. When a parade is dismissed, it is *bong*, it is *fini*; when a comrade is killed he is *fini*—“done for,” and when the war was over it was *fini* too.

But his knowledge of French does not stop at single words. He is a phrase-maker as well. When he meets a friend of an evening he will say “*Come on, Sava,*” which at a first glance looks like a peremptory command for some one called Sava to come on. It is really nothing more than his bowdlerized version of the familiar “*Comment ça va ?*”—or he may express much the same meaning with the words “*Come on alley-vous,*” or sometimes “*Comet alley vous.*” If the lady will have none of him he will ask humbly “*Fashy avec me ?*” so quaintly that the most adamant female heart will melt. She says “*Jamais*”—and when next he wishes to say “No, never,” he



remembers her remark, and says "*Jammy.*" Another phrase which he uses not uncommonly is "*Sam fay rien,*" which may be recognized by the *cognoscenti* as a potted version of "*Ça ne fait rien.*" But, in spite of the injuries he inflicted upon it and the duress to which he subjected any French word before it became a part of his daily vocabulary, he succeeded, by sheer daredevil effrontery, in making himself understood where any one with a finer sense for foreign tongues would have stood confused and dumb. That he was understood is a tribute to the mental sharpness of our French allies. They are a quick-witted people, and a polite.

When our soldiers returned to their civil occupations they did not at once cease to employ the words and phrases they had gathered together on a foreign soil. They used them to give a piquant flavour to their ordinary speech.

A century hence some learned and spectacled Teutonic professor will perhaps turn his attention to the subject, and will write a learned treatise under the title: "*Verbal Pillage: a Study of the Additions made to the English Language by the Great War.*"

He might do worse than illustrate his chapter on the word *strafe* with quotations from Lissauer's "*Hymn of Hate.*"



## XIX

### AT THE SIGN OF THE RED TRIANGLE

**I**F you were to ask any soldier back from the front what the Red Triangle stands for, he would tell you that it stands for comfort and warmth, and welcome and home. Being a Briton, and consequently reserved, he would not add "and for Christianity"—but he knows it.

You found the huts which bear that well-known device wherever there were British Tommies. They were hidden away, with roofs and walls carefully camouflaged, in nooks or corners as near the fighting line as the authorities would permit. They were at railway junctions, where there was a constant traffic of fighting men, and at ports where men or munitions were landed; and, wherever a Hospital or Convalescent Depot was to be met with, you would discover in its immediate neighbourhood a long, low hut which flaunted that significant symbol, and kept an ever-open door.

In the earlier days of the war, if I remember rightly, there was some criticism by its supporters, because a few of them, whose vision was so limited that they could not see beyond the end of their village street, felt that in launching out to cater



in a wholesale fashion for other than the purely spiritual needs of the soldiers the Y.M.C.A. was, in some sense, being false to the principles on which it was founded. But a visit to one of these huts in the zone of war, and an intelligent inspection of the work they were doing, would immediately disarm the most hostile critic. The Red Triangle stands for a fine type of practical Christianity, and by catering for their physical needs the Association reached and touched a large body of men who but for it would never have come under any religious influence other than that of the obligatory parade service. A tired and mud-stained man is more likely to accept spiritual refreshment if the needs of his body have first of all been attended to. You may make a saint out of a dyspeptic; but you will have great difficulty in stirring the religious emotions of a soldier who is cold and hungry and exhausted. Let him feel that you care for his body, of whose immediate needs he is very conscious, as well as for his soul, about which he is often inclined not to bother. Feed him and warm him first, and you will probably find that, as his body begins to glow with comfort, his soul has begun to thaw. You might reach him then; before, he froze you off.

To me one of the most delightful features of the Y.M.C.A. huts was that, though they stand for religion, they did not stand for sectarianism. Within their walls men of all creeds might meet. No questions were asked before a man was granted



admission. His passport was his uniform; his need secured him a welcome.

The huts were simple but very practical buildings. Usually they consisted of a long room, well warmed in winter, at one end of which was a platform. At the other end was a counter, behind which was a canteen where coffee, cocoa, and food were sold, and sometimes, in time of need, given without charge. In addition, other things the soldier might require might be purchased there—from pen or pencil to tobacco and books.

The wooden walls of the building were resplendent with many pictures. For the most part these represented homely English scenes, which awakened old and tender memories. Many of them were coloured plates from Christmas numbers of the magazines, and it was remarkable to notice how a picture taken from one of these papers seemed to acquire a fresh power of appeal, and a new attractiveness in these unaccustomed surroundings.

If the hut was fortunate, there might be, in a small room behind the platform, a dwarf billiard-table which was never without patrons.

The large hall was put to many purposes. Scattered about it were chairs and tables at which the men might sit and read or write, or play draughts, or chess, or dominoes, no man saying them nay so long as they were careful to observe the strict rule that there should be no gambling.

Let us pay half a dozen visits to the hut which stood just outside our hospital grounds, beyond the end of the Chestnut Avenue. By doing so we



shall learn a little of the splendid work that was done in these Y.M.C.A. buildings, and see what a part they played in the life of the homeless soldier. Full justice cannot be done to the scope of their usefulness in these short pen-pictures, but they will help to give some idea of the many activities that fructify under the sign of the Red Triangle.

It is the middle of the morning. At the canteen counter a number of men are waiting to be served. Some of them want tea; others are in quest of cigarettes; others, again, want papers and envelopes on which to write home. These last requisites are supplied free. At the long table which runs across the hut half a dozen men are seated busily engaged in keeping their friendships in repair. They are writing letters—to parents, or wife, or children, or pals. The note-paper they are using has at its head the superscription of the Red Triangle, and the envelopes beside them bear the same device. In how many thousand homes all over the world is that symbol well known and welcomed! It means a letter from son or husband, sweetheart or friend: a letter that might never have been written were there no such hut. One of the writers has finished his correspondence. He is musical, and goes to the piano. Soon the notes of some popular rag-time melody are being hammered out; but the writers do not seem to mind. Perhaps music of that kind is an aid to composition.

Near the stove a little group is sitting. One of



their number has a French morning paper, and is reading the news. As the names and places in the official *communiqué* are read—most often mispronounced with British barbarism—an interested auditor will exclaim, “I know that place. I was billeted there in ’16.” Another, whose memory is stimulated by the name of another village, declares that he was wounded there just before the Somme battle : and so they live over again the thrilling and glorious adventures of the past. The hut is their rendezvous : in some sense taking the place of their own fireside, where they may chat and smoke, and feel at home, no man saying them nay. Without such huts as these, where he might pass his leisure hours happily and in comfort, the lot of the soldier abroad would have been infinitely harder than it was—and, God knows, it was hard enough.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is evening. The hut is packed from end to end, and the atmosphere is filled with a cloud of smoke, the sight and scent of which would in peace-time rejoice the heart of any careful Chancellor of the Exchequer. But this smoke is untaxed. It proceeds from “ration” tobacco. All eyes are turned expectantly towards the platform, which is hidden by its drop-curtain. The hour strikes, and promptly the accompanist at the piano strikes up “The Long Trail.” In a trice five hundred soldiers are following him along it, but, ere the second verse is ended, the curtain is pulled sharply back, and there, in the extem-



porized lime-light, disguised with much paint, and spotless in white Pierrot costumes dappled over with great tassels of red, are seated “The Merry Medicals.” They are the musical members of our personnel, and their number includes several excellent voices. They start off with a rollicking opening chorus, greeted with vociferous applause, and then item after item is contributed—serious, sentimental, comic or topical, and each is hailed with a tremendous salvo of cheers. The comedian, whose whole personality is transformed by the atmosphere of the stage, brings the house down. In appropriate costume he is “Jones of the Lancers,” or “The Major”—and he plays the part to the life, for, besides having an excellent voice, he has considerable gifts as a mimic. He is recalled over and over again. An *encore* means another song, or it may be met by an extemporized verse, with a local hit, added to one of the songs. The local hit is always taken up at once, and, if smart, throws the audience into ecstasies of good-natured laughter. Or he may sing a song which is wholly topical, recounting in humorous fashion some of the recent happenings in the camp, or poking gentle fun, always well received by his victims, at one or other or all of the officers.

Or the concert may be a novelty, for the Y.M.C.A. has a wide net. The Fijians, big, muscular men, swarthy of skin, with fine white teeth, frank open faces, and heads of shaggy black hair combed upwards till it stands a hand-breadth high



above their heads, have been persuaded to give an entertainment. This is at once a novelty and a treat. In native costume—with the little khaki-coloured dentate kilt—they sing to us their old folk-songs, plaintive little love melodies, or awe-inspiring war-songs chanted with much gesticulation and hideous contortions of the face.

These soldiers are among the most intelligent and the best-behaved of his Majesty's Forces. Two generations ago their ancestors were cannibals. They are trophies of British civilization. It is not for nothing that the Union Jack floats above so many islands of the sea.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is a Friday night in winter. Again the hut is packed, and its walls crackle with the laughter of an audience that is being regaled by an officer, with a lecture on Lancashire humour. All through the winter, week by week, these lectures continue; varying in quality and style, but never in interest—whether the subject be the Origin of Man, carefully dealt with by a scientific M.O., or the epic of Mons dilated upon with inspiring eloquence by a perfervid Irishman. The enthusiasm of the audience on these occasions is not, naturally, so keen as at the concerts, but the interest is well sustained, and the audience is more sympathetic than critical. The Matron and sisters and nurses, and a sprinkling of officers, have probably found time to attend; and there is sure to be, not far from the front row, one or more representatives of the British West Indies, who will sit patiently



through a talk on Lancashire humour, or a lecture on Malta, with the same stolid look of patient, but uninspired attention upon their dusky faces.

\* \* \* \*

It is Sunday morning. The hut is metamorphosed. The writing-tables have been removed to some obscure corner; the canteen is closed; the red curtain hides the stage from view, and in front of it is a simple, but seemly, extemporized altar, with lilies between the brass candle-sticks, and a bowl of flowers just underneath the cross. Quietly and reverently the congregation is taking its place. Up in the front rows there is a splash of colour—the scarlet edging of the sisters' capes showing on each side of the square white muslin pendant that falls down from their caps. An officer or two drops in: the patients, in their hospital blue, come singly or in little groups, some on crutches, some with arms in a sling, some with an empty sleeve, some with a bandaged head. At home their own folk, the wife and children, the father and mother, will be worshipping at this hour. That thought is like a golden link.

Outside there is heard the steady tramp of many feet, and then, in column of fours, the company passes a window. There is a sharp command from the sergeant-major, and then reverently and steadily, in pairs, the company pours in, and the men settle into the seats reserved for them. The padre, his leather leggings and his brown boots showing under the hem of his robes, gives out a hymn, and, led by the piano, played by one of the



sisters, the congregation begins its worship to the music of its martial strains, or mayhap with the grand old words of the hundredth psalm—the best exordium for any service. Then the service proceeds—the rubric curtailed somewhat, but with the inclusion of a few special prayers, and, after the prayers are over, the padre preaches a short, straight sermon of some fifteen minutes, and with the blessing the service is over.

Later on there will be another service, for the Y.M.C.A. recognizes that Christianity is a bigger thing than any one division of it, and the hut is open for the use of the padres of all denominations.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is Easter Sunday. The hour 6.30 a.m. The morning crisp and cool. Before the altar there is an extemporized rail. Beyond it the padre is at his prayer of consecration. Then the communicants move reverently forward, and, kneeling on the uncovered concrete floor, receive the sacred symbols that have given comfort in the hour of trouble and strength in the hour of trial to faithful men and women the world over ever since the sacred Feast of Love was instituted. Meekly kneeling upon their knees are sisters and nurses who are living their daily lives in a spirit of noble self-sacrifice amid scenes of sorrow and pain; officers who are not ashamed to own allegiance to the Great Captain of their faith; and men who have found in the companionship of the Elder Brother a stay and support in the hours of awful trial they have experienced in the trenches. This



is a feast at which there is no distinction of class or colour or caste, and the chalice passes from sister to nurse, from nurse to officer, from officer to man, and from the white man to the black man, because all are one and all are equal here.

\* \* \* \* \*

Again it is afternoon : an afternoon in May. The hut is arranged as for a Sunday service. The writing-tables are pushed into a corner. The curtain is down over the stage. The altar is erected, and before it stand two trestles. There is a large and reverent gathering. To the left at the front sit the officers, to the right the matron and sisters, and there is a sprinkling of patients in their hospital blues. The hour is two o'clock. There is a heavy sound of slow-marching feet, and then there passes the window a wheeled bier drawn by two soldiers. At each side of it walk the bearers. There is a quiet word of command. The sound of the marching ceases, and then, after a moment's pause, the voice of the padre is heard reciting the inspiring opening words of the Burial Service : " I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord ; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live : and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

He enters the hut, and behind him, borne on the shoulders of six of his friends, comes the body of the dead soldier. The congregation rises to its feet. It is saluting the might and majesty of death. Slowly the bearers carry their burden up



the alley-way and deposit it gently and reverently on the expectant trestles. The simple coffin is hidden beneath the folds of the Union Jack—the flag for which the soldier has died. It wraps him in its embrace now like a mother, the Red Cross of St. George enfolding him and marking him as one of England's own. On the top of the coffin lie his cap and belt, the symbols of his loyal service. When the bearers have deposited their burden they file left and right to their seats, and other bearers come forward and pile the sides of the catafalque with flowers—great wreaths and crosses, be-ribboned as is the custom of France—from sisters and officers and men : and one special wreath from the dead man's special pals is laid on the floor at the head of the coffin. A sister takes her seat at the piano, and we sing that hymn which has done duty on so many similar occasions—

“ Jesu, Lover of my soul ! ”

What does it matter that the soldier sleeping there under the resplendent flag was a very ordinary man, obsessed with his share of human frailties. He has died like a hero at his post : and now he is infinitely wiser than the wisest of us all.

Somewhere in England there is a woman weeping for him. Will it comfort her to know what honour his comrades have paid him ? The matron, with true womanly instinct, thinks it will, and in a few days that lonely woman will



receive a photograph of the catafalque, draped with the flag, and buried beneath this wealth of flowers. The service proceeds: and now there is nothing but the committal words to speak. Then the padre closes his Prayer-book; we join in another hymn, and, after the Benediction, the bearers come again and carry their burden out to the waiting carriage that is to bear the soldier to his last resting-place. The congregation files out. A detachment of men lines the avenue down which the car must go. The officers stand at the salute, On silent wheels the funeral car steals away, passes the hospital gates, and is gone. But near the cemetery gate a flower-girl will leave her stall, and, while the bugle of the firing-party sounds a salute to the dead, will reverently lay upon the flag-covered coffin a bouquet of beautiful flowers. That is a symbol of the honour France would pay to a soldier of England.

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Full justice cannot be done to the huts of the Red Triangle in the compass of such a sketch as this. Each hut was well worthy of a whole volume to record its good deeds, and the men and women who officered them, frequently without fee or reward, are deserving of an honoured place in the long list of those who helped to win the war.

In days of peace a member of the Y.M.C.A. was all too often regarded with some unmerited suspicion by other young men. He was looked upon as a "mother's darling" or a colourless milksop. This attitude of mind was due to a



perversion of vision, as the millions of men who have profited by the manly and practical religion practised by the association have learned to their great comfort. They will not readily distrust this magnificent organization or its members again. It has meant too much to them ever to be forgotten, and when they returned home I imagine that many of them showed their appreciation by becoming its staunch and enthusiastic supporters.



## XX

### AN ENGLISH FLOWER FOR FRANCE

SHE came into our lives suddenly like a little lambent flame: she went from us as suddenly, as though the flame had been extinguished; but she left a memory like a benediction.

She was an Englishwoman—little more than a girl; but she had known great sorrow, and had been sanctified by it. She had given her best to England, and her husband sleeps under a wooden cross; but she felt she had more to give, and she gave herself to France. By such sacrifices the two countries are for ever bound by ties of blood that are stronger than chains of iron.

She came to work for the French Red Cross Society, and, being a skilful motor-driver, she was put in charge of an ambulance that brought the wounded and the sick down to the French hospitals. In the full flush of her youth and strength and enthusiasm she flung herself into the work, and rejoiced to think that she was doing something for the beautiful country on whose soil her husband had fallen, and in whose bosom he lay asleep.

Then sickness—sudden, virulent, deadly—came to her; but she would not give in. For a whole



day, with her blood at fever-heat and in the throes of a serious malady, she stuck at her post. She was an Englishwoman, and would not give in till the last ! But at the end of the day she could do no more ; her tired body refused to respond to the urgings of her indomitable spirit and she was compelled to give up the struggle.

Our kindly allies, recognizing that she would be happier and more at home among the people of her own race, sent her down to a British Hospital for Nurses, and there she came into our lives. But it was—

“ Only a look and a voice,  
Darkness again and a silence ! ”

In spite of tender and assiduous nursing, and all the help that medical skill could afford, her deadly malady made rapid progress and in forty-eight hours she was dead. As her hour drew near she was uplifted by the thought that she would soon rejoin her beloved, and when the spirit had taken its flight from her fair young body there was left upon her face a radiant smile of recognition and reunion.

Though far from home and kindred, a stranger among strangers, she was one of our own blood, and we paid her the honours due to an Englishwoman who had died on service.

The old brave flag was laid upon her coffin, and the great Red Cross of St. George flung its broad arms about the flimsy shell and claimed her as a daughter of England.



Sisters and nurses and officers followed her to her resting-place, and the reverent hands of British soldiers lowered the light burden into its narrow trench. And when the last beautiful words of the Burial Service had been spoken by the padre, the sisters rained flowers gently down upon the coffin-lid till its harsh whiteness was hidden beneath a mass of colour. There were purple flowers, for she had made a royal sacrifice ; roses, for she was English ; and lilies, because she was pure in heart.

So we left her sleeping there in the same land—though separated by many a mile—as the man she loved. It was her wish to die in France, and her desire had been satisfied. She could not sleep beside her hero lover, for the guns still thundered over his silent grave ; but she lies between two British soldiers, and what woman could have a nobler burial-place ?



## XXI

### THE INFINITE MERCY

“GAWD’S trewth,” he shouted, “what blarsted muck !” and he spat the medicine all over the white coverlet of his bed, while the sister, irritated almost beyond endurance by her refractory patient, had great difficulty in remembering that he was a very sick man, and controlling her temper.

He was the “bad egg” of the ward, and in all her long experience the sister had never had such an unpleasant patient to deal with. The good soldier is an habitual grouser : it is a British privilege to be so ; but in hospital, as a rule, he ceases to grumble, and behaves like the gentleman that he is. But this little pock-marked Cockney, with the receding forehead, the big, clumsy ears, and the animal face was, as a neighbouring patient said, “the putrid limit.” His language was abominable. His whole conduct was offensive, and his rudeness and ingratitude were by-words. Probably he had never had a chance. He bore evidence of having been raked into the Army from the gutter of a slum, and his conduct and speech were true to type. Under stern discipline he may have been a good soldier ; but there is a necessary



relaxation of discipline in hospital—though the hospitals have their own high standards, which the men are careful to observe—and, out of reach of the voice of the drill sergeant, he acted as though he did not know what discipline meant.

In fairness it should be said that he had been frightfully wounded, and was very ill, and frequently in pain.

From the first his case had been regarded as hopeless, so he was spared many a scolding which he well deserved, though on occasion the sister spoke sternly to him, and once the medical officer had to give him “a dressing down.” But all were without effect: and even the obvious displeasure of the other men in the ward, and their frequently repeated cautions, fell upon deaf ears. The padre, good soul, came to him daily, but failed to get through the adamant block-house in which his heart, if he had any, seemed to dwell. Obviously he hated padres. He classed them collectively as “perfeSSIONal devil-dodgers,” and when the padre tried to sound the shallow depths of his religious knowledge he was painfully shocked. “Gawd? Yes, I’ve ’eard ov ’im. E’s the bloke wot sends pore devils like me to ’ell.”

It was no use. Day after day the padre, sore troubled in soul by this case, came to his bedside. He was met with insolence, and shocked by the blasphemy, which seemed to come so naturally to the lips of this creature. When he ventured to pray with him the beautiful petitions of the liturgy were punctuated by ribald mockery. When he



upbraided him gently he was insulted with a vigorous, "Go to 'ell, you ole devil-dodger. Don't come worritin' a sick man again"; and when he offered him a soldier's Testament, he was shocked to have it snatched from his hand and flung on the floor with the words, "I don't want any o' yer damned books."

He was indeed a hard case, and in all his experience in civil life, or as a military chaplain, the padre had never met with one so difficult to approach. But, being a faithful padre, he persevered, and came daily to the bedside for half an hour, trying each day by a fresh method to get into the man's heart and every day when he left him he would leave behind some little message of spiritual cheer, which, for all the good it seemed to do, might equally well have been left unspoken.

Instead of improving as the days went by his conduct passed steadily from bad to worse, so that he became the pariah of the ward, whose bed was consistently shunned by the other patients. That in itself indicated the utterness of his degradation, for the bond of brotherhood which subsists in a hospital ward between the patients is a strong and intimate thing, not easily broken.

Even the sisters and nurses, tried to the uttermost, almost shrank from having anything to do with him; but their sense of duty and their unfailing sympathy made them continue to nurse him with as much care as though he had been something more to them than an incessant trial and a constant perplexity.



The surgeon had long ago declared the case to be a hopeless one ; but, in spite of that opinion, they devoted to him as much care as though there was reasonable ground for hope that he would recover. And never by word or sign did he show the least gratitude. Instead, he continued to blaspheme as his wounds were being dressed, attributing to the sister who did the work with all gentleness the full responsibility for any pain he might experience, and lacerating her feelings by the unkindness and brutality of his language. A less fine character would have refused to have anything more to do with him, and would have left his care to the orderlies ; but not so the sister, who regarded her profession as a high calling. Without that conception of her vocation, many a nurse would be forced to give up her work. But, as the days went by and his physical condition declined from bad to worse, even the sister was heard to say that it would be a blessing for every one when he did die : and there was no heartlessness in the remark, but much sound common sense.

Now, the manner of a man's death is, as a rule, in keeping with the fashion of his life. But sometimes it is otherwise. I do not pretend to be able to explain the things I am about to relate. They may have been due to the action upon his brain of poisons absorbed from his ghastly wounds ; or they may have been due to the fact that his temperature was high, and fevered blood is a strange stimulator of the fancy ; or they may have been due to the Infinite Mercy, against which



he had blasphemed, but which was too great to cast him out. I do not venture to decide. But, if what happened was due to septic absorption or fevered blood, why was it that this man did not have visions of the evil things with which in life he seemed to have been so familiar? Such a thing would have been explicable. What happened remains a puzzle.

On the morning of the day he died he woke up, and for a time was very silent. When the sister went to see him he greeted her with a smile—the first she had ever seen upon his face. He answered her questions civilly and quietly, and, as she picked up his wrist to count his pulse, he said in a whisper, “Sister, do yer see ’em?”

A little startled, the sister looked at him. He was looking beyond her, with a strange rapture in his eyes. “See what?” she asked: and he answered “The bewtiful lydies, sister. There’s one, two, three, four, five, six ov ’em all rahnd the bed. There’s one standing on each side ov yer, and they’re all smilin’ at me. Who are they, sister?”

Involuntarily the sister cast a glance to right and left, and saw nothing. Then, after a little pause, she said gently, “I think you’re dreaming, Bill. There’s nobody here but me.”

But he would not be put off. His eyes wandered round the sides of the bed: his lips moved as he counted again, and he finished with a firm “Yes, sister, six ov ’em. Fair bewties, I tells yer.”



Now, in dying patients, it is not uncommon for delirium to appear ; but there was no evidence of any delirium here, except the vision. The patient otherwise seemed collected and clear.

The sister gently rearranged his pillow and passed on. As she went up the ward she heard the man say to one of his neighbours, “ I say, mate, cawn’t yer see ’em ? Six fair bewties. Lovely lydies, I tells yer.”

His neighbour looked up and round, then said, “ Stow yer gammon, old man. There’s nowt there.”

Undismayed he called the V.A.D., who was passing. She came to his bedside. “ Better this mornin’, Bill ? ” she asked.

But he made no answer, except to say, “ Tyke keer, nurse : you’re knockin’ agin’ one ov ’em.”

“ Against one of what ? ” she asked.

“ Agin the lydies, nurse. Cawn’t yer see ’em ? Ave yer all gone blind ? Why, they’re all rahnd the bed. They’re fair knock-ahts, I tells yer.”

Puzzled, the nurse sought the sister, and reported what Bill had said : and together they went to his bed.

“ Tyke keer,” he whispered. “ Don’t crush ’em up like that. They’re lydies, I tells yer.”

When the medical officer arrived the sister reported the facts to him, and he went to examine his patient. To his surprise he was greeted with a cheerful “ Good mornin’, sir.”

“ Good morning, Bill,” he said. “ What’s this I hear about your having six lady visitors ? You



know, visitors are not allowed so early in the morning"—and he smiled at the sister.

"I tells yer strite, Doc. I never asked 'em, sir. They're here now. One, two, three—eight ov 'em now. Fair knock-ahts, I tells yer. Can't yer see 'em?"

The doctor made no reply, but, after a rapid examination of his patient, retired with the sister. "He's wandering a bit, sister," he said. "I don't think he can last long now; his pulse is very groggy. If he should get at all excited I should say give him twenty grains of bromide. But I hardly think he'll need it. It's only a quiet form of delirium."

Later, the padre came. To-day he was greeted with outstretched hand, and his heart leapt within him. "Don't sit down, padre—there's a lydy on the chair. There's eight ov 'em—fair bewties, I tells yer. Puffickly lovely they are. All rahnd me bed. Strike me pink if I'm tellin' yer a lie, padre."

The padre spoke gentle and comforting words.

"Is it angels they are, padre?" And the padre, who knew about these things, said "Yes. I do not see them. But I have no doubt they are angels."

And then he spoke to him, as he had spoken many a time before, winningly and persuasively, telling that old but ever-fresh story that has comforted many a dying man, and there was no oath or blasphemy on Bill's lips to-day. He seemed to be listening; but his eyes kept wandering round



the bed, and his lips moved as he counted his visitors over and over again. "There's eight ov 'em, padre, I tells yer."

When the padre had finished his office he left the boy, promising to come and see him again later in the day. "I'll try to keep the lydies 'ere till yer comes back, sir." And the padre bade him try.

But when he returned the orderlies were carrying a stretcher from the ward—a stretcher covered with the glorious folds of the proud old Flag. The boy was dead.

The sister told him the manner of his passing. All day long he had lain, propped up on his pillows, in a state of quiet joy. His "bewtiful lydies" had never left him, and, as the sister stood beside him, he had talked to her constantly about them. And then suddenly he had sat bolt upright in bed, stretched two eager arms forward, and, with the words "Oh! Christ!" upon his lips, had fallen back dead.



## XXII

### THE SOLDIER'S RELIGION

IT is possible for one to be interested in music without being a musician ; and one may be a lover of art without the gifts necessary to make him an artist. But in neither case does the converse hold good. The musician and the artist must both be interested keenly in their art. A man may be interested in religion without being religious ; and it is possible for a man to be religious in the highest sense, and take no interest whatever in those things which are usually supposed to denote the religious mind. Religious faith and religious practice ought to be complementary to each other. As a matter of common experience, we know that they are frequently divorced from each other. Certainly this should not be the case ; but, if we are going to describe the world as we find it, we must recognize that the great professors are sometimes the little doers ; while those who do the great things—who forget self, endure hardness, and, in the best sense, keep the faith—speak little of their beliefs, and would have extreme difficulty in formulating them if put to the test.

The religion of the average soldier is a fascin-



ating study. It has perplexed not a few padres, which is little to be wondered at, as it is of a type and kind that they have not often encountered in their pre-war work. For the purposes of this chapter we must divide the soldiers into two great classes, namely, those who have identified themselves more or less closely with religious life or religious organizations before they joined the Army ; and those who, like Gallio, have cared for none of these things. Most of the former continue while on service steadfastly to maintain, often amid difficulties, a loyal allegiance to their colours, and such faithfulness not infrequently secures for them the respect and admiration of their comrades. I should say that the Roman Catholics are the most punctilious in their observation of the outward forms of religion ; after them in close succession come the Salvationists, Wesleyans and other Methodists, followed at some little distance by the Presbyterians and the members of the Church of England. But this opinion, which is purely a personal one, is founded on observation in a somewhat restricted sphere, and is not a conclusion based on statistical evidence, though I should be surprised to learn that statistics, if available, contradicted the impression. I think it was Voltaire who gibed at our multiple sects, attributing their existence to the fact that, as a liberty-loving people, we left each man free to find his way to heaven by his own route. Religious liberty is a great possession, but religious licence may become a danger.



Few soldiers are atheists. They believe in God, but their knowledge of His attributes is somewhat uncertain. They have, however, a simple but strong faith in His justice, and many of them felt that in the war they were fighting on His side. It was such a one who said, when dying: "I've done my bit for Him: it's up to Him to see me through now." And which of us would dare to suggest that the eternal mercy of the All-Father would be denied him?

The faith of the average soldier seems to be compounded of a stoic fatalism tinged occasionally with superstition. No bullet will hit him unless his number is on it, and when he goes into action he always feels confident that his neighbour is more likely to "stop one" than he is himself. Superstition has invaded the citadel of his belief from many sides. It is, for example, a dangerous thing to light three cigarettes with the same match. Disaster awaits one or other of the participants in this foolhardy rite. This curious superstition, which has an iron hold upon our men, is said to have been imported from Russia—the home of religious credulity. Proof of its Slavonic origin is lacking, and I incline to believe that the idea was first put into circulation by some astute manufacturer of lucifer matches who wished to increase the sale of his products.

But, whatever the origin of the belief, few soldiers will willingly expose themselves to the risk of coming under its spell. I do not know whether it is merely a concession to popular opinion, or



because the superstition has actually laid its withering hand upon the educated mind as well, but, over and over again, in a mess whose members were all medical men or clergymen, I have seen a second match struck, even in times of shortage, to light the third cigarette.

It is important to remember that some of the people at home stimulated superstitious practices among the soldiers by sending them various charms or mascots which were supposed to have the power of warding off evil. At first the recipient wore this mascot because it was the gift of a friend, and she probably a lady, rather than from any real belief in its vaunted efficacy. But if he was spared to come through some tight places unscathed he was tempted to believe that there might be some value in the charm after all, and some of his brothers in arms, hearing of his escapes and his talisman, made haste to provide themselves with the same protective device. So the superstition grew, till it almost became an article of faith.

As Tommy is a person who does things, his religion is one of practice rather than precept. He does not, or he will not, understand the constant prohibitions of the ordinary religious code. He has no time for the reiterated "Thou shalt not" of the moral law. He does not want to be forbidden; he is a man under authority, accustomed to obey. He wants direct commands rather than enigmatic prohibitions. He can understand "Thou shalt"—that has a soldierly



directness about it, while "Thou shalt not" may be nothing more than a fussy restriction imposed by an incompetent sergeant-major—if such an individual exists at all.

The "nots" of the commandments and the creeds and dogmas of the Churches have kept many men outside their door. When religion becomes more of a positive practice of life than a negative programme of conduct it will be quickened with renewed strength.

It has always seemed to me that optimism should be regarded as a cardinal Christian virtue. It makes for the happiness of the individual and the sweetness of life of the community. It is some shadow of the grace of God, and a religion that does not contribute to the happiness of humanity by breathing into men's souls the spirit of optimism has little right to call itself Christian. It may be bad taste, but I would rather have for company a sinner with the sunshine in his heart, than a saint with a halo round his brow, but a black cloud upon his back. Tommy is an invincible optimist. No calamity can destroy that effluence of his spirit. He looks on life with a cheerful heart largely because he is in such superb physical health. A beautiful and triumphant soul may succeed in living in an unhealthy body, but it has a better chance in a healthy one; and, as Tommy is a "splendid animal," his soul can rise to its full stature. Many a man has achieved a great reputation for saintliness of the austere variety because his digestive organs were out of



order ; and not a few medieval mystics wrestled mightily with the devil, when they were really fighting the by-effects of a torpid liver. The famous spiritual malady known as “ acidie,” which used to afflict the saints of the pre- and post-Reformation eras, was due more often, in my opinion, to the unhealthy conditions of their physical life than to any spiritual declension. I make a present of this suggestion to any religious psychologist who wishes to write a treatise on the subject. In spite of the description of Christ as “ a man of sorrows ” I am confident that His was a very sunny personality, and in the indomitable cheerfulness of our soldiers He would have found something after His own heart—an attribute to admire and praise.

Tommy’s practice is a far surer and more beautiful thing than his faith, which is frequently very nebulous. His practice is a concrete thing : made up of little items—but real, solid, and constant. No body of men ever showed such charity to each other as do our soldiers. You have only to observe their solicitude for a brother-soldier who is sick unto death ; to see them pass his bed on tiptoe lest they disturb his sleep ; to hear their anxious inquiries as to his progress ; to notice the pride they feel if they can do him a service ; to witness their tenderness if asked to help to lift him—a tenderness that no woman could surpass—to learn that there are many spiritual graces in the heart of the soldier who makes no open profession of religious belief. Let



us not forget that the words "I was sick and ye visited Me," fell from divine lips, and with them was joined this meed of approbation : "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the lest of these, My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." The sacrifice of self has always been regarded as the highest type of Christian devotion. It was a grace upon which the Master set the seal of His own example ; and it is a virtue practised daily by our soldiers. Every one of them is ready, if need be, to lay down his life for his friends : and there is no greater love than that. There comes to mind a story which I believe is quite authentic of a private who surrendered his opportunity of going on leave that another, who had some domestic trouble, might have priority. It is a great sacrifice to give up one's leave, but in this case it was the biggest and the grandest thing that any man could do, for it cost the giver his life. He was killed in an attack in which he would not have taken part had he gone on leave at his appointed time. I know not what profession of faith this hero made : perhaps, like many another soldier, he made none ; but where the practice of life was so eminently Christian was there need of any profession at all ?

One of our men overstayed his leave by a week. He had adequate reason to ask for an extension, but he failed to observe the necessary formalities, and, on reporting in London on his way back, he was recognized as an absentee, and was put under arrest. It was a serious matter to absent oneself



from a unit in France without leave, and if one's absence was sufficiently prolonged, or if one discarded one's uniform and wandered about in civilian clothes, the charge might become so serious that the death penalty was incurred.

This man was very popular with his comrades, and, though an excellent orderly, was known to have a somewhat dare-devil streak in his character, and, as the days ran by and there was no news of his return, rumour began to be busy. It was bruited about that he had been arrested in civilian clothes. This sent a chill through many hearts: if true, it marked him as a deserter of malice aforethought. At last he arrived, escorted by a guard. He was in uniform! Thank God the worst rumour had proved untrue!

Then began a series of little episodes, each in itself a trivial thing hardly worth putting on record, but making together a beautiful demonstration of grace of heart in his comrades.

He was taken to the guardroom. He had not been there five minutes before one of his friends came sheepishly up to the corporal of the guard, bringing his own clean towel. Would the corporal let the prisoner have it? Another brought a fresh piece of soap. Would the corporal let him have it, and "say it was from old Bill"? Of course there was no need for these demonstrations of friendship, as water, soap, and towels were already within easy reach of the guardroom; but it was their simple, loyal, brotherly way of letting a pal in trouble know that they had not forgotten



him, but were prepared to stand by him. They knew the long and weary journey he had come : they knew that he was travel-stained and not looking his soldierly best. He would be all the better of a good wash up before the C.O. saw him. So they thought. And the corporal, being a man of heart, let the prisoner make use of the gifts. They were putting into practice the ethics of a grander religion than they would readily profess with their lips.

Did he want a "friend" (for every prisoner is entitled to be represented by a friend at his court-martial) ? Every one of them was anxious to volunteer, for the first precept in the rough-hewn code of the soldiers' moral law is, "Never go back on a pal, if that pal is down." Which thing seems to me to have in it the nucleus of a Christian virtue.

After being seen by the commanding officer, he was put back under remand until certain facts which he had advanced in explanation of his absence could be inquired into by communication with the police of his native town. During this interval he fell sick, and was admitted into hospital. Here, though still a prisoner, the restrictions that hedged him about were somewhat relaxed. He was able to see his friends, and they came to him one by one to express their sympathy and to give him counsel. But, what was much more Christian, they gave him their cigarettes—so that some of them had to go without until the issue of their next tobacco ration.



“ I was in prison and ye came unto Me ” was said of the righteous, unto whom was given the promise of eternal life.

To have seen the unacknowledged Christianity of the British soldier at its best one must have observed his conduct toward the German wounded. Once, when a large convoy, consisting partly of our own men and partly of Germans, came down to the hospital I had my attention called by a wounded Tommy, who was lying on a stretcher, to a German not far from him. In answer to my inquiry he said cheerily, “ I’m all right, sir ; but that German bloke needs yer ; ’e’s sufferin’ ’orrible.”

I have seen our men sharing their cigarettes with soldiers against whom they had been fighting a few short hours before : for it is a rare thing to find one of them bearing any malice toward an enemy, once he is down and out.

An R.A.M.C. orderly fresh from home, and something of a fire-eater, said to a wounded soldier of the Gordons, who had come in with a number of wounded Germans : “ Germans ! Why should they be treated the same as you fellows ? If I’d my way I’d stick a bay’net through every one of the blighters.”

To which the Scot made answer, in the slow speech of his race : “ Weel, there’s a time and place for everything. If ye want tae stick Germans I’ve nae doot ye can get transferred frae the ‘ poultice-wallahs ’ tae a line regiment, and ye’ll get yer bellyfu’ o’ fechtin then. But in the mean-



time thae puir deevils are doon. They've bled for their country the same as me, and I bear them nae ill-will noo."

"Charity," which is a gift of God, "suffereth long, and is kind." To his credit be it said, the martial orderly retired crestfallen.

There was more real bitterness against the enemy at home than there was among our fighting men. They recognized that in fighting, even with unclean hands, the Germans were simply obeying orders: and, as Tommy lived under a regime where he, too, had to obey orders, though never, thank God, orders that degraded his manhood, he can appreciate his enemy's point of view, even though he may not approve of it.

It is not for men to judge, but I imagine that on that great day when, as St. Paul tells us, the last grand réveillé will waken the slumbering dead, there will arise from the soil of Flanders a mighty host "clothed with white robes, and with palms in their hands." And some of them will be the spirits of men whom the churches may never have known—men who may never have made any religious profession, men given over to some of the grosser frailties of the flesh, hard swearers, hard drinkers, and unclean. Which things are of the body, and the body is of the dust. But within them they had some spark of divine fire which made their practice of the big things, the brotherly things and the royal true things such as their great Captain could recognize as conforming to His example.



The fruits of the Spirit may grow upon unpropitious and unlikely soil, and even the malefactor on the cross died with a glorious promise ringing in his ears.



## XXIII

### AN INTERLUDE

“*NEQUE semper arcum tendit Apollo*” (Not even Apollo keeps his bow always at full stretch), and the most industrious medical officer in the zone of war had an occasional respite. At one time every bed in the hospital was occupied, and strenuous endeavours had to be made, at short notice, to extemporize others. But there were hiatuses of quietness when many of the patients had been transferred to England or discharged to the convalescent camps, and others had not yet come to take their places. Such periods of alternating stress and relaxation were unavoidable in warfare, for hostilities could not always be carried on at the same intense pitch, and our hospitals were accurate weather-gauges of the storms or calms in the front line.

On quiet summer afternoons we frequently went for walks together, and tried to forget the war and all its hideousness.

We left our little cluster of tents, straggling like a brood of white chickens under the pine-trees, and made for the water-course. It purred along merrily between its concrete banks. It lacked the fair pellucid freshness of an English country



stream, and when we looked into its depths we felt thankful that, before we were called upon to drink it, it must pass through our chlorinating tanks. Along its banks we walked, till we came to a narrow door in a high wall. Through this we passed and found that the water-course had become a cascade. It was racing wildly down a declivity, chuckling with glee at this brave adventure, and throwing up jets of sparkling and refreshing spray.

We left the stream and turned to the left, its music still following us. Soon, if we cared to look, we should catch a glimpse of the sea—blue as a sapphire. But our path was not immediately toward it. We turned our backs upon it for a time: later we should see it again in even more wonderful beauty.

We skirted the grounds of a noble old château, once, tradition tells us, a royal residence, and paused for a moment to scramble upon a rickety and rustic bridge that we might peer into the depths of the little artificial lake for the quick-moving rainbow trout that lurked there. To-day they were hidden, more than likely under the green weeds and bushes that constituted a pediment for the mutilated stone figures which made a centrepiece on the expanse of the waters. Then we passed on, stooping to pass under a barrier of barbed wire, and ultimately emerged upon the road through a great iron gate.

The road was ankle-deep in dust, for it was high summer, and it was flanked on either side by a



lofty wall. In England, such a road would be pleasant with glorious hedgerows, with trailing sprays of honeysuckle, and festoons of pink and white roses. Here, every road was walled in, and, by contrast, the country roads of the homeland became more alluring than ever. These high walls, which are so characteristic a feature of this part of France, give the lie to the national motto. We were in the land of liberty, fraternity, and equality ; but the walls were a flat contradiction of each of these terms. They shut us in definitely lest we trespassed, and they robbed us of any comprehensive view of the nearer distance ; but they compelled us to lift up our eyes to the hills, and there is eternal glory there. We missed the English hedgerows ; and we missed the English birds. Such a road in England would be vocal with many songsters, and a chattering blackbird would dart elusively before us. Here we were denied that largesse. If we would have music we must sing ourselves, or mayhap we might meet a peasant woman bearing a bundle of wood, and singing as she went.

The road, neglected during the four years of war, was as uneven as a sheep-track upon a Scottish hillside, and nothing but the knowledge of the joy that lay ahead of us would carry us over it a second time. It was such a road as Bunyan might have placed his pilgrim upon. He would have found enough here to test his faith : and, though he would have met no lions upon it, he would have been challenged by a ferocious dog, which



from the safe and unassailable fastnesses of its wire stronghold above the stone wall barked its savage hatred at every wayfarer. It was a French dog of a kind, but failed apparently to recognize that the *entente cordiale* was binding on its species.

The longest road comes somewhere to an end, and, after trudging for a mile through fine dust that every footstep flings up into a cloud of parching smoke, we came at last to a place where the trafficking feet of custom had made an alternative route, and we left the ill-conditioned pathway with relief.

We were now in a great bay of land picketed on each side by limestone crags. The silvery grey-ness of the rocks was broken by the clustering green things that have found a foothold upon them, and all their summits were crowned with triumphant pine-trees.

Life asserts its eternal triumph over death, and Nature seizes every niche and cranny where she may exhibit her opulent variety.

Under our feet there was dry and springy turf, a joy-giving contrast to the aridity of the highway. A handful of goats or a flock of sheep, with their shepherd at their head, in the old Eastern fashion, might be found nibbling the close herbage, whilst the bells at their throats sprinkled the air with a spray of pleasant sound. But the sheep and goats were not always there. Sometimes their shepherd led them to higher pastures, and then the silvery tinkle of their bells, falling



through the drowsy atmosphere, and made sweeter by distance, was like an elfin melody.

Huge dragon-flies, with lumbering bodies of blue, or green, or bronze, plane on gossamer wings all about one, with now and then a daring but not irretrievable side-slip, or a perilous but arrested "nose-dive." But they do not "loop the loop." That adventurous feat is reserved for their human imitators.

There were butterflies in the air, visions of entrancing beauty, dancing about with a purposeful purposelessness : dallying a moment here, tarrying there ; then off again only to return to the same warm stone, or the same perfumed flower. And there was the constant murmur of the bronze-banded bees, overpowered somewhat by the metallic chatter of the cigale, which is like the sound of a badly adjusted electric hammer.

A green lizard, tempted by the sunlight to wander far afield, scampered hot-foot back to the bush-hidden wall.

But what was this strange moving mass that progressed before us ? Why did it move ? Such things are usually stationary. Did our eyes play us a trick ? But no ! there behind it was the motive power—a huge black beetle pushing along this mass of refuse ten times its size. Other creatures besides man work hard.

There was a familiar perfume in the air. We were trampling over wild thyme, and its bruised heart was pouring its incense forth into the motionless air. All the sights, sounds, and sur-



roundings were strange to the English heart ; but here was a bit of the old dear homeland flung right beneath our feet. And, as old-remembered perfumes have a strange haunting power of quickening the memory, I was caught up into a Midsummer-Night's Dream, for, like the bard of Avon—

“ I know a bank whereon the wild thyme blows.”

But that is somewhere in the land of heart's desire, and my home-going was yet afar off.

But I remembered that Francis Bacon, in his essay which begins, “ God Almighty first planted a garden,” had something to say of the perfume of wild thyme. Could I recall it ? It runs something like this : “ But those which perfume the air most delightfully, not passed by as the rest, but being trod upon and crushed, are three : burnet, wild thyme, and water-mints. Therefore you are to set whole alleys of them, to have the pleasure when you walk or tread.”

The Gardener who planted the first garden had scattered this treasure under my feet. There was some one in England who loved the scent of thyme. She should have a piece of this. One's pleasures are doubled by sharing them.

The turfen path wound sinuously on. To the right stood a wild cherry-tree that two months ago was a bouquet of blossom. Ere long its fruit would be weighing it down like clusters of red beads.

And now we left the meadow path, and walked



in the shade of the pine-trees. Here there was coolness, and gentle murmurous voices when the branches stirred, and that sense of an intimate spirit of the woods indwelling in their heart, of which all nature-lovers are conscious. And where a shaft of sunlight broke through the branches it was iridescent with innumerable winged things: for the absence of birds is the salvation of the insects.

The gnarled stems of the pine-trees were compounded of bronze and silver, with here and there, for the seeing eye, a splash of purple; and the shadows among the branches were of a delicate violet tint which makes a soft and charming contrast to the fresh green of the foliage. There is no artist like Nature; no painter with such a sense for colour.

The long, arm-like ridges of the hills were closing in upon us. We sat on a boulder under the pine-trees, and let Nature pour her immemorial balm upon our spirits. The nomad has the best of life. He lives near the heart of Nature; he shares her secrets; he partakes of all her joys; and if his vision is clear he may look through one of her many windows and catch a glimpse of God.

But we must up, and on! Ahead of us the surface of the road became once more a perplexity. We had left the pine grove behind us, and the path before us was uneven with loose and jagged stones, and it wound uphill. But the summit was in sight, and who would fail now? A quarter of mile of winding ascent, with the tum-



bling crags closing in on every side ; a piece of broken road that was often wet with the waters of some hidden spring ; the perfume of thyme was in the air once more, mingled with the fragrance of lavender ; a few last breathless steps, and then—the vision !

We were standing on the edge of a great natural cup, whose farther side has been broken away, letting the sea flow in. To right and left the limestone crags, with their sprinkled covering of green run down, sloping to meet the waters into which they cut to form the inviolable ramparts of a beautiful bay.

Beneath our feet a winding and stony path, more than a mile long, led with multitudinous zig-zags to the beach. Up this panting horses sometimes dragged the loads of winter fuel, or one might meet a surefooted donkey, driven by a swarthy fisherman, bearing its laden panniers to the far-off town. We might follow this path if we would ; but there was a finer though more arduous route by which to descend. If we looked over the edge of the cup we could see a track leading sharply but sinuously down. That was the path to take if one would quickly reach the sea ; but first we would drink our fill of all the enchanting loveliness spread before us.

In the near distance the sides of the cup were dotted over with stunted pine-trees and low bushes. Here and there among them a giant boulder threw up a projecting knee. Down in the bottom of the cup the pine-trees were huddled



together, and, as one looked from this height above them on to their crowded tops, they suggested a flock of sheep herded together in a valley by a questing dog. And from the edges of the mass a few trees straggled like lost or wandered sheep, up the crags on either side. Beyond this thicket of trees were three splashes of red—the tiled roofs of a few cabins. But all the features of the landscape were subsidiary to the jewel of the sea, for which they were only a setting. It was of an indescribably translucent blue save at two places, where it almost seemed, from the iridescent greenish hue it exhibited, to have been covered with a pellicle of oil. But a nearer acquaintance taught us that the greenish banks of water were shallow reaches, running over a sandbank. Far out the blue bay, sheltered between the arms of the hills, ran until the sapphire hue deepened to a wine-dark purple. I used to think that Homer's description of the colour of the sea was tinged with poetic hyperbole; but here then before me were all the tints he ever imagined or saw. No artist's box of colours contains pigments that, blended ever so skilfully, could depict the beauty which unrolled before me. No master of words could ever breathe into the dead symbols of his craft the inspiration that would make this raptured scene stand out resplendent from the printed page. Like all indescribable things, it was compacted of simple elements: of grey crags, green trees, and the pellucid blue of ocean. But what a picture! Surely when God went forth to mould the earth



out of void He lingered with a special tenderness over every nook and cranny, every hummock and cleft in those rocks, and endowed them with peculiar loveliness; and all the convulsions of Nature since the earth leapt in Creation's womb, and every wind that has carried an errant seed, have conspired to make that corner of the globe, beautiful from the hand of its Maker, more perfect still.

We passed over the edge of the cup, and made our way down the stony, ankle-testing path, through among the outlying trees, and onward into the coolness and twilight of the cone-carpeted aisles underneath the massed branches. The chatter of the cigale, and the more strident crescendo of the grasshopper, made music as we went.

At last we came out upon the shelving and crumbling shore. The dancing waters flung their challenge in our faces, and soon we were plunging from a rock into their refreshing depths. Can human happiness confer a greater boon?

The swarthy Provençal who kept the little red-roofed tavern that nestled in a dimple along the cliff side, had an omelette ready for us five minutes after we crossed his threshold. And we sat upon the green balcony that ran out over the sea, listening to the gentle plash of the water on the silvery rocks beneath us. By and by the sun will go down in glory, and darkness will fall upon the earth; but if we tarry we shall see the glorious moon burst resplendent through the clouds, and lay upon the waters a great broad



silver ribbon that leads imagination up from the earth to the very heavens.

There was peace here : peace, and a holy silence. Could it be that anywhere earth throbbed to the drums of war ?



## XXIV

### IN CHAINS

**I**N a stone quarry behind our lines a gang of German prisoners were at work. The sharp clink, clink of their hammers was heard all day long, and now and then there was a tremendous boom as a charge, sunk deep in the ribs of a rock, was exploded. I frequently visited these men. Except for the presence of a couple of sentries who, with bayonets fixed, acted as a guard, and their uniform, with its distinctive blue patches on legs and back, there was nothing to show that they were not free. Well-fed, comfortably clad, and not bullied, they looked happy and contented, and, be it said, applied themselves to their appointed tasks with Teutonic thoroughness and industry. If you asked one of the sentries whether they gave any trouble, he would tell you that they were a very docile crowd, and too glad to be out of the battle-line ever to try to escape.

As one looked at them one often wondered whether any body of our men, who were unfortunate enough to be prisoners in German hands, were as well cared for; and one's doubts became a torture as memory after memory of brutal ill-treatment meted out to British captives rose before



the mind. It is not the British way to be cruel to hostages of war ; we are more prone to err in the other direction. But to be a prisoner is in itself, for a man of spirit, a degradation : and, though prisoners of war do not wear chains, they are chained by invisible bonds as irksome and humiliating as manacles upon their wrists.

As I stood watching them one day, memory, whose tricks of association are inexplicable, brought a picture to my mind.

In a dingy room in an obscure and dirty street in ancient Rome I saw an old bent man sitting at a table writing. As his style made its marks upon the tablets before him, I saw him bend over to examine, with the strained eyes of defective vision, the words he had written, and then turn to look at the soldier who stood beside him. The old man was St. Paul. He had turned to inspect the soldier's harness in order that his delineation of the armour of the Christian warrior should be, in a military sense, correct. He was verifying the details for his description of the whole armour of God by reference to the trappings of a soldier of Nero, but he was transmuting the material into the spiritual, and, as I watched, I saw that the old man was in chains. His feet, his waist, and his left arm were all shackled, and bound by chains to a broad belt that passed round the body of his guard. It was thus that St. Paul "dwelt two whole years in his own hired house" at Rome, in the days of the cruellest and most bloodthirsty of all the Cæsars—in



bonds, yet free. It was thus that with his own right hand, "in large letters," because of his semi-blindness, or with the help of one or other of his friends, he wrote those deathless, eloquent, and inspiring epistles to some of the branches of the young Christian Church,—epistles which have been the source of help, of inspiration, and of hope to countless thousands of people who have never troubled to think of the circumstances under which they were written.

He had laid upon his own heart the counsel he gave to others: He was "redeeming the time because the days are evil."

For another thirty years the streets of every town and village in Britain—indeed in almost the whole world—will be peopled by maimed and mutilated men. We shall stand aside to let the passenger with an artificial leg mount the car before us; we shall lend our eyes to the blind to pilot him through the race of traffic; we shall be instant in service to the man with mutilated hands whom we shall meet at table; we shall adjust the speed of our walk so as not to outstrip our friend who must go on crutches. And when, of an afternoon, we take a walk abroad, and are uplifted beyond the common things of the world by the unsullied beauty of nature, our aspiring thoughts will be brought rudely down to earth again. The man who is driving a tractor that is leaving a long chocolate-coloured furrow athwart the green beauty of the field, is wearing an empty sleeve!



So the hideous memory of this purge of blood which we have experienced will cling to us for nearly half a century. But some time about the year 1970 there will be a sudden and marked diminution in the number of these mutilated men. The old, old prediction of the three-score years and ten as being the allotted span of man's life will again prove true, and, as always in the battle of life, the angel with the scythe will at the end prove the victor. In 1980 various newspapers up and down the land will publish short obituary notices of old men who have just passed away. These notices will have a strange uniformity of superscription. They will read "Death of a Veteran of the Great War," and the bloody events of the battle of the Somme or the fight for Cambrai will be read for the first time by the amazed and horrified eyes of children who have no knowledge of what war is. By 1990 the maimed survivors of the war will be a thin, thin line, and before another decade has elapsed the final remnant of that gallant band will have answered the Last Muster.

Time will ultimately wipe out the disfigurements and mutilations wrought upon humanity by the brutality of man, and Nature, always jealous of her stock, will see to it that none of the deformities produced by the war are handed on to the next generation. This is a consideration of immense practical importance, so it is not out of place to state definitely that there is no scientific ground for imagining that characters acquired in the life-



time of an individual through injuries or wounds are transmitted to that person's descendants. If the contrary were true, and the children of every maimed man were likely to bear upon their bodies the stigmata of their father's wounds, the havoc of war would not stop with one generation, but be increased unceasingly as the years went by. But Nature is a kindly and jealous mother, who could never tolerate such an affront, and in due time she will obliterate the last evidence of the ravages of war, whether on the gashed body of earth which she will hide with verdure and flowers, or in the kingdom of humanity. But until that kindly office is completed we shall have daily reminders of the cruelty and hideousness of war.

Every maimed soldier makes light of his wounds. But in the hidden chambers of their hearts, they have a stern battle to fight, which makes as great demands upon their courage and their manliness as any conflict they ever took part in to the noise of guns. They recognize that there are sufferings harder to bear than the physical pain of wounds : that through their wounds they are debarred from participating in many pleasures and avocations that are the solace and the joy of others who are not maimed like them, and bitterness, disappointment, and discontent may claim them for their own. They have need of all their courage and philosophy to carry them through the level years—now that their neighbours have grown so accustomed to their physical defects that they cease to remember the heroic occasion of them ; the years



when understanding sympathy is sometimes ousted by an intensely practical selfishness.

And of such bitterness may their thoughts be woven that they lose heart, and come to look upon themselves as useless derelicts, a burden to themselves and to others. That there is no sufficient justification for such an attitude of mind we have a convincing proof in the records of the lives of many of the most eminent men the world has ever known.

Let the blind soldier—surely one of the saddest proofs of the insensate cruelty of war—remember that Homer and Milton suffered from the same disability as himself, and yet achieved a deathless fame.

And let those who are wounded in the body or the limbs think of Pope, who was a hunchback, or Byron, with the face of a Greek god, but the feet of a satyr, or of Sir Walter Scott, with his paralysed, half-useless limb. Doubtless their physical disabilities must often have cast a shadow over their lives ; but they triumphed over them, and, though held back from many a stirring adventure, or strenuous game, because they were not as other men, they became each a monarch in his own realm. The little Phrygian slave Epictetus, a cripple through the cruelty of his master, but an inspired philosopher by the grace of God, has proclaimed a doctrine of contentment for all in like case with himself. He was, as he himself said, “an ethereal existence staggering under the burden of a corpse,” but neither his physical infirmity



nor the soul-destroying influences of his environment could hold his spirit in thralldom. He rose above them both, and his teaching, which has come down to us through the centuries, breathed the air of high courage and indomitable cheerfulness. A slave for the greater part of his life in actual fact, and always shackled to an infirm body, he was the master of his own soul, and, as the prescient writer of his epitaph said, "dear to the immortals."

In the sphere of physical endurance our soldiers have proved themselves to be superior by far to any of their storied and belauded predecessors. I am confident that, with few exceptions, the maimed among them show themselves to be as heroic and as resolute in bearing the burden of their physical limitations as any philosopher who has ornamented pages of history with gems of stoical reflection. They may not leave to posterity any record of their soul-strivings or their conquests in the realms of the spirit. But their lives are a splendid and perpetual witness for all who are brought into touch with them. That they have their own dark, testing hours, in which they torture themselves with the question whether it was worth while, no one may deny. That some few of them emerge from this conflict of the soul embittered and hardened and soured is to be expected, since humanity is what it is. But if I know anything of the British soldier, and of the grit of British manhood, I imagine that these maimed, mutilated men who are to wear the



shackles of physical disabilities for the rest of their days give to the world a sublime demonstration of moral fortitude such as has never been seen before. In the trenches they faced the worst with set jaws and an ineradicable smile, and they will face the future with the same spirit. They will come to learn that, though their broken bodies may hinder their activities, they cannot impede or interfere with the soaring of the spirit. The chains of ill-health or of wounds cannot fetter that.

It is incumbent upon those of us who have been spared to emerge from the war unscathed to recognize that we owe a special duty to all who have been less fortunate than ourselves. As the distance from the war increases, the memory of all we owe to the maimed amongst us will tend to become less and less vivid, and as memory fades our sense of obligation may tend to decrease. This has happened after previous wars, the heroes of which in more than one instance have been allowed to pass into oblivion, and to die in penury. It will be to our unending disgrace if any man who, through wounds sustained in the war, or by disease acquired in consequence of the privations he has had to undergo, is permitted to experience a similar fate. It is the nation's duty to recognize that her defenders should be a first charge upon her munificence. If these men had not been prepared to sacrifice themselves who amongst us would have been able to enjoy the comfortable days of peace? We owe them an incalculable



debt. Let us see that we try to repay it. The debt is one that cannot be discharged with gold, and though an adequate pension for every wounded man is a first step towards the settlement of our obligations, there is something else which we can all give, lavishly and unstintingly. It will cost us nothing; but it will be as immeasurable riches to all these stricken men. We must keep alive in the community a spirit of esteem and admiration for them. The admiration should be respectful, and should never be allowed to degenerate into fulsome adulation. Hero-worship of the latter type tends ultimately to degrade both giver and receiver. But we must cultivate the attitude of mind which will enable us to see in every maimed man we meet a creditor of our own: one to whom we owe a debt, who bears upon his maimed body a title signed and sealed to our homage and our eternal gratitude. We may not know him, he is only one in a crowd; but he showed us the greater love in being ready to die for us, and we owe him a little love in return.

The machinery of a high-speed industry is apt to be an unfeeling and soulless thing; and that machinery may be unwilling to find room for a cog, a lever, or a wheel that is not thoroughly efficient. But it is our duty to see that no man is penalized in the industrial world because, through his wounds, he is not such a good workman as otherwise he might have been. Let us recognize frankly that, but for him and others like him, there would be neither machinery to work



with nor work with which to feed it, and let us see to it that a suitable place is found for every wounded man who is capable of working at all, even though the industrial machine must in consequence move a little more slowly. By doing so, and by the ceaseless nurture of a spirit of understanding sympathy, we shall make the future more tolerable for those to whom we owe so much.

Congenial work, within their capacity, is the gateway which leads most men to enduring happiness. We must see that that gateway is open for all.

In this way we shall help those men who are doomed to spend the remainder of their lives in the chains of physical disabilities to forget their fetters. We shall enable them to realize that their burdens are not heavier than they can bear, and that, whatever the disadvantages of a maimed body may be—and they are by no means negligible—

“The thrall in person may be free in soul.”

The brave words of Henley, himself an ethereal spirit bound to a damaged frame, are capable, I imagine, of giving new courage and hope to many in like case:—

“Out of the night that covers me,  
Black as the pit from pole to pole,  
I thank whatever gods may be  
For my unconquerable soul.

“In the fell clutch of circumstance  
I have not winced nor cried aloud.  
Under the bludgeonings of chance  
My head is bloody, but unbowed.



“Beyond this place of wrath and tears  
Looms but the horror of the shade,  
And yet the menace of the years  
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

“It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishments the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate :  
I am the captain of my soul.”



## XXV

### WHEN THE BUGLE BLOWS

THE most beautiful life is that which is one grand harmony. It cannot be said of military life that it often attains to this height of perfection ; but, if our lives were not a perfect harmony, they were at least lived to music, for the bugler was, like conscience, a monitor who rarely slept.

He began his pestilential day's work in the unearthly hours of the morning, at a moment when sleep was particularly alluring, by sounding the *réveillé*. So strident were its notes that, long before the last of them had throbbed into silence, the whole camp was awake. If one must be roused rudely from one's slumbers, this early morning bugle-call is more than adequate for the purpose ; but one awakens with a better grace if the bugler should happen to be in an ambitious mood, and treats one to the "long *réveillé*" or "the arouse." This is a beautiful call, equally effective, but less damaging to one's morals. The hot word that might, on occasion, leap to one's lips when the *réveillé* sounded, dies unuttered if the bugle pours in a cascade of sweet melody over the somnolent camp the witching music of this latter



call. And from *réveillé* to "lights out" we ordered our day to the sound of the bugle.

Only experience and a good ear will enable one to find a path through the intricate calls that thread the hours like beads on a string. But some are more easy to recognize and remember than others. The soldier of the old Army, with a view to assisting the raw recruit, elaborated a series of more or less appropriate mnemonics which expressed the rhythm as well as the purport of many of the calls, and made them more easily memorized.

The "cook-house call," which announces his various meals to the hungry man, hardly required any adventitious aid to prompt the brain. His appetite ought to be, and usually is, sufficient. But if his appetite fails him he knows that when the bugle sounds the notes that seem automatically to clothe themselves with the words—

"Come to the cook-house door, boys,  
Come to the cook-house door!"

his next meal awaits him, hot, fragrant and palatable.

There is another call, which utters its summons at 8 p.m. It is the "officers' mess call," and the words with which Tommy has fitted it were much more applicable to the condition of affairs before the war than they were when all England was rationed, and the officer's wife shared an equal burden of privation with the wife of the private soldier. But before those days some humorous and cynical soldier invented this dog-



gerel verse to fit the rhythm of the notes and to emphasize the imagined privileges of the "colonel's lady" and her favoured sisters :—

"Officers' wives get pudding and pies,  
Soldiers' wives get skilly,  
The corporal's wife gets two black eyes,  
Which nearly drive her silly."

And, although they had lost all relation to the truth, they continued to persist as a kind of army tradition.

Then, our men paraded for inspection at 8 a.m. At 7.30 a.m. "the half-hour dress" was sounded, and the words which the bugle was supposed to speak are hortatory as well as commendatory, for—

"All good soldiers dress for parade."

As the minutes slipped by and buttons and badges were being polished till they gleamed with the lustre of gold, the bugle sounded again to remind the industrious users of elbow-grease and "Soldiers' Friend" that they had—

"A quarter of an hour to do it in,"

Then came the "parade call," which speaks with the simple directness of a command from the sergeant-major :—

"Fall in A, Fall in B,  
Fall in every company !"

When it was necessary to summon a picket the bugle shouted its message through the camp, and



the men detailed for this duty hurried to their posts :—

“Come and do a picket, boys, come and do a guard,  
It isn't very easy, it isn't very hard.”

With his innate sense of humour the soldier has designated the defaulter's call—that perpetual teasing call which, every thirty minutes, summons the wrong-doers to report themselves, until they are heartily weary of the sound of it—the “angel's whisper.” It is a call that, from the beauty of its phrasing, is quite worthy of the name; but I incline to believe that Tommy applied the title to it in a spirit of derision. There is some of his characteristic philosophy in the words which he has woven into it :—

“You may be a defaulter as long as you like,  
As long as you answer your name.”

As may readily be imagined, one great event of every day was the arrival of the mail. A day on which, for any reason, no letters came to the camp was a colourless day, and a gloom settled on us all as deep as though British arms had sustained a staggering reverse. Once, when our hospital was under orders to move from one part of the war area to another, we received no letters for eighteen days. A careful post office had paternally sent them on to our new camping-ground, where we found them awaiting us. But the suspension of all communication with distant friends during that period taught even the most matter-of-fact among us that love and friendship kept fresh by



frequent letters meant more than can readily be set down in words. So the coming of the mail was an episode of great moment, made none the less pleasant by the ribald words which the soldier of the old Army had fitted to the call which announces it :—

“ Letters from lousy Liz, boys,  
Letters from lousy Lou.”

The bugle is to a camp what the bell is to a ship. It is the sign of the flight of the hours. It does not sound to give us sidereal time, but, since the day is divided up by many duties which have to be discharged from morn to sunset daily at the same hour, the bugle-call which summons the soldier to their performance at the same time indirectly proclaims the situation of the shadow on the dial. But there are two calls of which this cannot be said. For they are sounded at a moment which no one can foretell. They are the Convoy Call and the Fire Call. The “convoy call” summoned the stretcher-bearers when a party of new patients arrived, or when patients were about to be transferred to England by ambulance train. The call consisted of the Regimental Call ; but, to impart to it the proper significance of the moment, the note *G* was sounded at its end twice, if the convoy was of “local sick,” and four times if they had come from the ambulance train. As the final notes pierced the silence the stretcher-bearers left whatever task they might be engaged upon and hurried to the reception-



tent, or to the wards, as the case might be, to bear the weary burdens from the ambulances to the comfort and quiet of the long marquees, or from the wards to the ambulances that were to take them on the first part of their journey home. In times of pressure the Convoy Call might sound many times a day, and often through the night. Always its summons was answered with alacrity.

Another call that startled us at unexpected and incalculable moments was the Fire Call. It is a call whose first wild notes sound like a terrified scream, and even to those who are unaware of its precise significance it conveys the idea of alarm. No sooner was its message recognized than the whole camp was alive. Men, waked suddenly from their sleep, dashed from their tents, still completing their dressing, and there was the tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp of a multitude at the double racing to their appointed stations. The stentorian voice of the sergeant-major rang out: the various companies of men hurried hot-foot to the rendezvous, seizing as they went every fire-bucket and fire-appliance that lay along their path. When they reached the appointed place they found the men of the fire picket already at work, spraying with a dozen hose-pipes and hand-pumps a building or a tent that was in the lurid grip of an imaginary conflagration. After some ten minutes of ardent work the sergeant-major's whistle blew, the bugler sounded "the dismiss," and the men returned to their beds thankful that the alarm had been only a practice



one, and not a summons to that most dreadful of catastrophes, a fire in a canvas hospital.

So we lived our little lives, performing our varied duties, instant in service, alert to help wherever and whenever the imperious bugle commanded us. But an hour came when the longest day was over, and through the gathering shadows rose and fell the wailing notes of the "last post." This is one of the most haunting of all the bugle-calls, and it is passing strange that such suggestion of sorrow, such pathos, and such triumph can be woven out of the five simple notes that constitute the whole gamut of the bugle's scale. Sounded with feeling and sympathy, the "last post" thrills and touches the heart. It is the bugle-call blown over a soldier's grave. Perhaps that everyday association lends to its notes a melancholy fragrance, but in itself the call teems with a sadness that cannot be expressed in words. Rising and falling, its bewitching music pulsates through the darkness like a threnody that is at once a pæan and a lament. We are borne on the ascending notes up into the atmosphere of brave imaginings, and deeds well done, and then swept back gently but irresistibly in the stream of the wailing cadence into the abyss of sorrow and despair.

But we are not left there to mourn. In one proud, defiant, triumphant note we are lifted up to the heights again and left there upon the tip-toe of being, solaced by the thought that regret is but an empty ache, and that the deepest sorrow may be conquered, if only we will quit ourselves like



men. And then comes the silence—a silence that is almost pain.

After the magic ululation of the “last post” had died away, there was but one call more. Shortly and sharply there sounded “lights out,” and after that there was a great darkness. But the darkness was never absolute in this camp of ours, which in some sort was a simulacrum of human life. All through the night ministering hands were busy in holy service, and solace and comfort and help were there for the summoning of all in sore need.

“Last post,” “lights out,” and after that the darkness; but it was no cheerless, hopeless, and eternal gloom. Dawn lit her altar-fires on the summit of the eastern hills, and the “réveillé” awoke us once again to face the duties of a new day.

To-night the “last post” sounded; but life and labour do not end there. To-morrow will come the *réveillé*, and with it the high challenge of an unknown day: and to-morrow is always more beautiful than yesterday, for those who lay hold on Hope.



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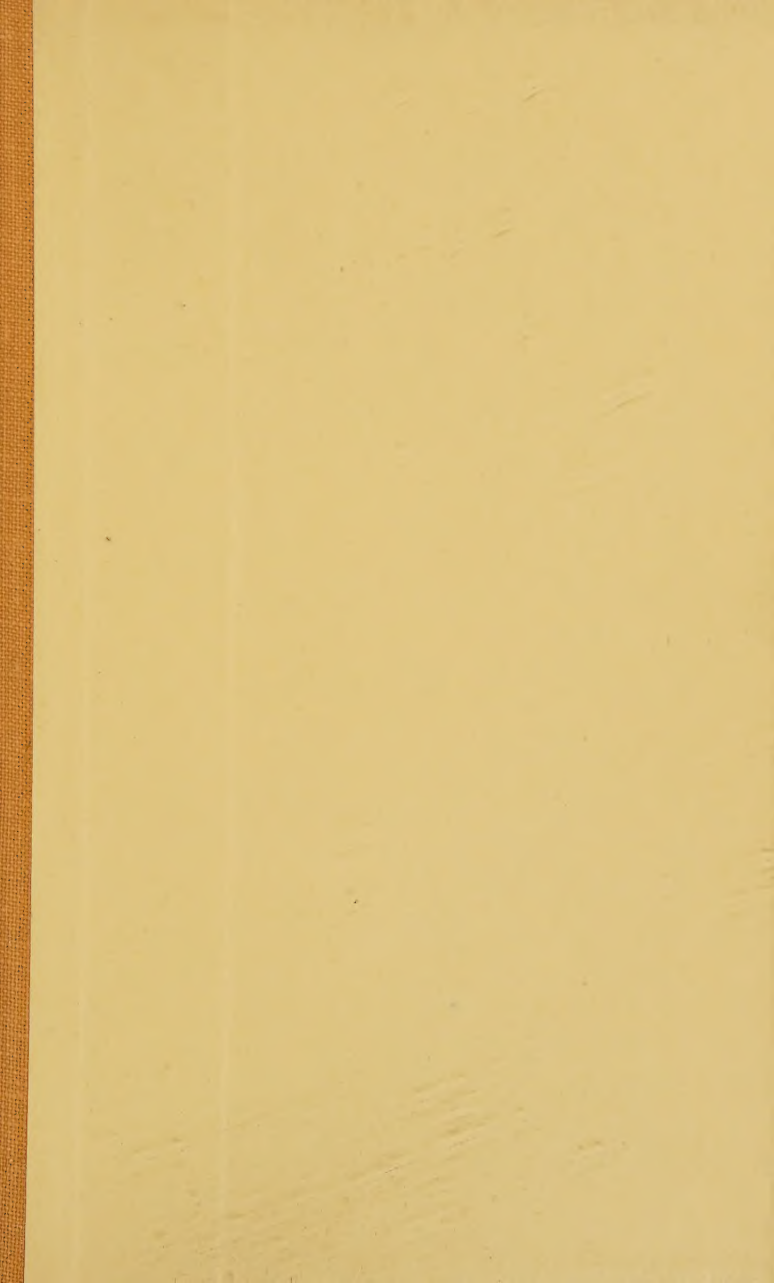














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